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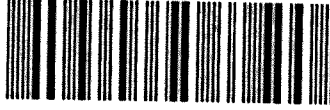
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**Subjectivity Experience and Method in Film and
Television Viewing:
A Psycho-Social Approach**

**Submitted to The Open University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This is an interview-based piece of psycho-social phenomenological audience research, based on eleven interviews and a series of letters with six working class participants using a psychoanalytically informed method: Free Association Narrative Interviewing. The research aimed to create an in-depth study of the emotional, affective and biographical relationships with 'favourite' film and television texts and also texts that have had an emotional 'impact' on the viewer. The research brings together and develops psychoanalytic film theory and sociological and cultural studies approaches to media audience research to explore this phenomenon.

Film theory has traditionally utilised textual analysis as a method and the audience has been figured in response to the text. Media and Cultural Studies research into audiences has utilised 'textual' approaches and analysed reading and interpretation of texts. Another strand of empirical audience research exists which relegates the text in favour of an approach concerned with understanding the practices and politics of viewing. Film theory has traditionally found psychoanalysis a useful analytic tool, whilst empirical audience research, interested in both reception and uses, has preferred sociological and cultural interpretive paradigms. These differences of approach and focus have often prevented dialogue between various disciplines -film, media and cultural studies - with regard to audiences.

This research attempts to bridge some of these divisions by focussing on *both* the reception of texts and also viewing practices. I argue for a method retaining textual analysis as part of a multi-layered method, which includes interviews, and socio-historical analysis. The research utilises and evaluates psychoanalytic concepts and ideas and begins from the historically contextualised position that audiences now view in a post-cinematic era. I use this term not to signify the end of cinema, but to point to the developments in home viewing, which mean films are not always viewed in the cinema. Also such developments suggest that film theories that are based heavily on the cinematic viewing situation may need to be re-evaluated. Theoretically, the research does not reject what have been hegemonic post-structural models but seeks to enhance established approaches by also utilising perspectives from a range of psychoanalytic perspectives including object relations.

The sample of interviewees contains participants from across the age spectrum to explore the experience of technological and social change from different vantage points. The impact of developments such as time shift technology, video and DVD on the relationships with texts and the viewing practices of audiences are examined. Following this, a central research question concerns the ways in which personalising viewing technologies have their own subjective impact upon memory, identity and family relationships. Therefore the home, where most of this technology is located and used is explored as a unique viewing space.

The research data provides rich accounts of viewing experiences and the uses of texts and viewing practices in everyday life. New light is shed on established and

important concepts in media and film such as identification. The research found examples of forms of identification that have not been explored in previous media and film research for instance intergenerational, sibling, biographical, idiomatic and 'emotional' identification with texts. Other findings included the use of texts to address personal trauma and anxiety resulting from the lived experience of social mobility in what Ulrich Beck has called 'new modernity'. These findings add to the understanding of the experience of viewing and the way media texts are made meaningful and used by audiences.

Alternative conceptual models are offered to enhance established approaches. Bion's work is used to understand how film and television visual 'moments' or moments from plot development are used in 'thought'. The work of Bollas and his concepts of idiom, and six forms of object 'use' help to explain the relationship between taste, trauma and the lived experience of social class. Repetition compulsion and afterwardsness explain the significance of memory and experience in viewing practices and favourite texts.

The research evaluates some established post-positivist critiques of method and knowledge production and argues that psycho-social methods are effective and workable. The combination of case study and Free Association Narrative Interview Method used demonstrates that it is a viable and effective approach to interviewing for media and film research. It is shown to be particularly effective for generating narratives with biographical and emotional significance. The method is also shown to be an appropriate method for psychoanalytically informed audience research when combined with other methods such as textual analysis.

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INTRODUCTION PUZZLES AND PROBLEMS

If a group of social and cultural researchers was asked to trace the genealogy of their research questions it might be reasonable to assume that for many the questions would be informed by the desire to explore and make sense of events encountered as part of their own experiences. Although autobiography is not a prerequisite of the research agenda there is now increasing acknowledgement that many research projects, implicitly and some explicitly, develop questions that emerge from personal experience (Walkerdine 1996, 1993; Lacey 1997), as well as from intellectual engagement with theory. This can be viewed as an example of an effect of the 'cultural turn' and also as a result of the impact of feminist critiques of positivist objectivity that I will address in Chapter Three. As a post-graduate student of research methods also seeking to develop a method that could answer the questions I asked at that time, I gravitated towards articles on method that explained the process of research (Seiter 1990; Walkerdine 1997), as well as the findings. I was interested in the way in which puzzling experiences niggled away in the researcher's mind until eventually turning into a viable research project.

Research is a process, and this research emerged from what were perceived as the limitations of established film and media audience theory in the light of contemporary technological developments. I had a series of 'puzzles' that were part of my biographical experience concerning viewing and I found film and media theory unable to provide full answers to these puzzles. This introductory chapter will outline some of those most pressing conundrums as a way of introducing the central themes, debates, ideas and findings of this project.

It is pertinent then to briefly introduce the research 'problem' which has biographical significance for me. As an adult I was aware that my favourite programmes were linked to, and grew out of, my experience. I loved texts about close happy families such as *The Partridge Family*, *The Waltons* and *The Little House on the Prairie*¹. It was obvious from a brief survey of these texts that they represented idealised happy families with discourses of old-fashioned family values of love and support particularly around hard work and education. They provided important fantasy cultural spaces for me as I grew up in a difficult working-class family in an industrial part of northwest England. Later, I became interested in the biographical features of 'favourite' programmes and the identifications and subjective effects they might have for the viewer: something that film theory and media research had not explored in this particular form.

Zittoun (2006) has researched the use of familiar objects such as photos or music in times of emotional upheaval. Zittoun argues that some objects provide familiarity, so texts and other cultural resources are used for their symbolic value (they symbolise home for instance) to manage the transitions associated with growing up and becoming independent. She is interested in the use of symbolic resources that

¹ *The Waltons* (USA CBS 1972-1981), *The Partridge Family* (USA ABC 1970-1974) and *Little House on the Prairie* (USA NBC 1974-1983)

are meaningful for individuals but she does not explore fully the unconscious dynamics of this. As I will explore in this research, viewers have subjective relationships with texts and these texts have symbolic meaning, but this in only one aspect. The meaning of texts is not fixed and can change over time suggesting that even if an object is used as a cultural resource in one area of the viewer's life this can change and develop over time. The idea of cultural resource must also include consideration of the idea of emotional and unconscious resources.

For many years my favourite programmes lived mostly in my memory. I could sing a theme tune to myself and instantly be transported to 'Plum Creek' or 'Walton's Mountain'. Occasionally, BBC 2 or Channel 4 would show re-runs and I would watch them every week as an adult. Certain episodes, for instance: *The Woman*² is an episode which contains moments that provoke intense emotional responses for me. I explored this and realised that despite an established set of female characters in the programme that I was familiar with and fond of, my identification was always firmly located around John Boy, the eldest son. I also realised that this was linked to my fantasies around having an 'education' which was something people from working-class backgrounds like my own rarely achieved when I was a child. Although poor, John Boy managed to obtain a college scholarship and his ambition was to be a writer. In this episode he falls in love with an educated, older woman poet and is forced to contemplate leaving his family for a new middle-class life in New York. I am always moved by his social awkwardness in the college environment, and with this educated, sophisticated woman. The text took on new meaning for me when I eventually entered higher education and also felt as though my social background was visible to all. So, the text spoke to my experience of social class. Even now, this text generates sadness for me around the difficult contradictions and feelings that concern being 'educated' and the inevitability of leaving a working class background behind. I wanted to find out more about the emotional experience of class through viewing and texts.

The advent of video enabled me to record episodes and view again. Marketing trends that have seen 'classic television' turned into expensive box sets of DVD now mean that viewers can own entire series of favourite shows on DVD. These box sets usually provide added bonus features containing information about the cast and production details. Thompson (1990), critical of textual analysis that examines only the internal characteristics of texts to make assumptions about audience reception, suggests that it is important to understand the processes of production and the socio-historical context. This particular trend to re-market popular television programmes in box sets is invested economically in discourses of nostalgia and the memory of the viewer. The box-set product however facilitates a new relationship with the texts. No longer does the viewer have to wait a week for the next episode, they can watch an entire series in one go if they wish. The box-set product however, also promotes forms of fan behaviour (discussed in Chapter Two) as the viewer is able to become an 'expert' on the show. Processes of production previously hidden (and not deemed necessary for the viewer to enjoy the show) are now

² *The Waltons* 1975 USA

foregrounded. The growth of internet fan sites around particular shows also changes the viewing of individual episodes as the viewer has access to added layers of knowledge that impact on the meanings made.

Technology also changes viewing situations and timing. I find that I like to return to some texts at certain times and in particular places, watching in bed for instance. The repetitive nature and familiarity with the texts is very comforting. I wanted therefore to account for the persistence of certain texts and also how technological developments facilitate forms of repetition. I asked consequently if there is a biographical component, influenced by life events in the past, as well as in the everyday, which forms an essential part of the 'relationship' with favourite or much returned to texts.

Taste has been an influential concept for sociology, media and cultural studies due to the impact of Bourdieu's (1984) influential study of taste, *Distinction*. This research does not look at taste in the wide-ranging way Bourdieu did, but concentrates on an aspect of taste that Bourdieu did not consider, taste as an emotional *experience*. I have pointed to the biographical significance of some favourite texts and suggested that memory and experiences are important in understanding the significance of particular texts. This develops media audience research by adding a biographical dimension to class, gender and age in reception studies. The particular approach I have adopted to biography acknowledges that my case study participants have unique experiences and their experiences illuminate fascinating interplays between internal and wider socio-historical processes. Hand in hand with questions of biography, meaning and interpretation, there were also questions of texts, viewing and uses. Some theories of subjectivity have noted that an image becomes 'alive' when it is used or read by a viewer (Hall 1999). Television can be viewed intensively but it is also noted for being viewed with a 'distracted' gaze (Ellis 1982) or listened to rather like an extension of radio. Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988) describe television audiences as passive and TV as a 'low involvement medium' both this idea and the idea of the television switched on as background noise for instance suggested that the category of use needed to expand and be explored further.

As noted above, technological innovations in recording and time shifting facilitated the development of various kinds of relationships with favourite texts, which this research will explore. The ability to record from television or purchase favourite texts gave viewers a degree of selection and control previously denied to them in the broadcast or pre-television cinema era, and this generated questions about creativity and 'uses'. A number of questions concerning viewing practices compliment questions of biography: How are favourite texts viewed? Is the place or time of viewing significant? It is possible to purchase classic programmes or old favourites from the *past*, this suggests that memory and biography may be significant in sustaining the relationship with texts. It is equally possible to *discover* a programme as Chris (who the reader meets in Chapter Six) did with *Frasier*. Once discovered, he began enthusiastically recording the programme and watching daily, so an intense relationship developed over a short time. I wanted to explore if

biography was equally significant in more recently acquired attachments to texts. Technology clearly facilitated different uses for texts and I wanted to explore in what ways home viewing technology is involved and used in the relationships with texts.

I have what I think of as a special, long-term relationship with the musical *Gypsy*³. The film tells the story of Gypsy Rose Lee, considered to be the most famous stripper to emerge from Burlesque theatre, and the relationship with her mother Rose. The film has a musical score that I loved, uplifting and full of optimism. It contained songs about 'getting out' and leaving hard, working-class life behind, that always make me feel inspired. At the same time as the fun songs there are also songs such as '*Rose's Turn*' that was full of anger, resentment and bitterness as Rose expresses her own frustrations with not achieving her dreams. *Gypsy* is a film that I frequently return to on video. I am also aware that, prior to video and (more recently) if the film is broadcast on television, no matter what I am doing I feel compelled to watch the film even though I have seen it so many times, and that in places I could recite the script. In fact it was this familiarity that caused me to question what was happening in the viewing experience.

The film centres on the fraught and difficult relationship between Rose and her daughters, June and Louise. Rose is the quintessential, pushy stage mom. She wants to live out her own dreams of performing in 'legitimate' theatre, such as Broadway through her girls. June, the most talented of the two and frustrated by Rose, leaves, and despite all Rose's efforts, Louise cannot 'make the grade'. A mistake leads to Rose and Louise being accidentally booked for a seedy Burlesque show. Motivated by financial hardship, and much to Rose's disgust, they agree to perform and Louise presents a form of striptease. For once, Louise finds something she is good at and she becomes 'Gypsy'. The relationship between mother and daughter disintegrates as Rose, full of envy, tells Louise she sees her achievement not as success, but failure.

Throughout the film I found this relationship fascinating and compelling but also, whenever I viewed the film there was something about it that caused me to feel 'uncomfortable', whenever I viewed the film. In particular, there is a confrontational scene between Gypsy and her mother towards the end of the film. As the scene approaches I realised I start to feel uncomfortable. This was an embodied feeling of unease, a slight fluttering in the tummy, and a rise in temperature, feelings I can now on reflection, identify as usually associated with anxiety. The dialogue was a particular cause of this mild anxiety as Rose would berate Louise and list all the struggles she had, scrimping and saving, pushing on to ensure the girls had a career in show business. The theme of the scene was sacrifice and was based on the question 'what did I do all this for?' The viewer is aware that Rose fails to acknowledge her own investment in her daughter's stage career: she did it for Rose.

³ 1962 Dir Jerome Robbins Warner Brothers USA

I realised I identified with Louise as she fights with her mother to be recognised as an individual trying to find an identity she is comfortable with, as I fought with my own critical mother. This draws attention to the subjective and affective responses associated with identity. Far from being pleasurable, the scene is always difficult for me to watch, but yet I am drawn to it and fascinated by it. As a film student I learnt about narrative and the importance of the male hero and male gaze and this film seemed far from the masculine identification models I was learning about from theorists such as Laura Mulvey. At the same time I was convinced that the staging of 'desire' could not fully explain the strong, often unpleasant feelings this text generated. I was clear that there was a powerful biographical aspect to my intense responses which concerned social class and my relationships with significant figures from the past.

The relationship with the text did not remain static however. During another chance viewing on television one afternoon, as a new mother, holding a sleeping child on my lap, the film provided me with a shock. What could be shocking about something so familiar? When the film began I suddenly realised my identification had switched. The narrative of the film is driven by Rose's aspirational desires for her children and herself. She wanted a better life for her children materially and in terms of respectability. Early in the film she powerfully expresses her desire to take her children away from their poor working class life. With only limited avenues open to working class women who are single parents she chooses show business. They only obtain work at the lower, but respectable, end of performing in vaudeville, appearing in theatres for a mainly working-class audience. What she wants is the respectable high-class life of Broadway, which is why, Louise finding success in Burlesque was so galling for Rose. For the first time I understood Rose and her desire to materially change the life of her family which motivates the film. As a new mother I understood how my own hopes and dreams had suddenly become fused with my hopes, dreams and desires to protect my child. When this difficult confrontational scene started there were parts of me that still felt very much like Louise a daughter who could not please her mother, but I was shocked at how the experience had changed and that I powerfully identified with Mama Rose. The nature of my identifications demonstrated that my identifications were fluid, moving between two characters in a text, some narrative scenarios, and a sleeping child on my lap.

How could this viewing experience and switch in identification be understood and explained? Had others had similar experiences? These questions drove the research project. As a film and media student I encountered a variety of explanations; many are outlined in Chapter One where I review film theory and media audience research. However, the models I encountered in media studies, such as uses and gratifications, could not explain the embodied and emotionally shocking aspects of my viewing experience. Psychoanalysis seemed more appropriate for understanding affect and feelings, but the Lacanian models that dominated film theory, tied up as they were with the specular abstractions of the apparatus, did not adequately explain my experience. Psychoanalysis was also linked to methods that were concerned with the text and the cinematic apparatus. It became apparent

that, empirical research that could account for the relationships with texts, including individuals' biographical connections to texts, was needed. Also required was a method that could help understand strong feelings, emotional responses and memories in relation to particular texts.

Below, I am going to introduce the structure of this thesis, but first I want to clarify the central research questions and aims, which will then be explained further. I have three core research questions. The first asks, what does it mean to have a 'relationship' with, or form 'attachments' to, a film or television programme? To answer this question, I explore connections between biographical events, varying emotional responses generated by texts and their influence on identification with texts. I investigate how this might lead to certain texts becoming 'favourites'. Once established, I consider how relationships change and develop over time and explore the effects, if any, of wider social and historical developments on the relationships with texts.

The second question emerges from the first and considers in more detail the significance of one particular form that relationships might take, that of 'viewing practices'. Whilst viewers may have favourite texts, they are 'viewed' in particular ways, from memories to bed-time 'wallpaper'. I wanted therefore to explore in depth the subjective attachment to particular viewing practices. The impact of home-viewing technologies such as time-shift and personalised viewing systems such as *Sky Plus* has facilitated new ways of viewing both film and television. I look specifically at examples of repetitive viewing practices involving favourite texts and examine how these might be located in wider sets of viewing practices. In relation to this I also wanted to consider the subjective aspects of the lived experience of social class and gender.

My third question asks 'what is the most effective method for empirical research on relationships with texts and viewing practices?' The research began by asking if it is possible to bring together aspects of film theory and sociological/ cultural studies audience research in a productive way methodologically. I will discuss in Chapters One and Two how I use and evaluate a range of methods including textual analysis and qualitative interviews. I adopt a method informed by psychoanalysis and evaluate its effectiveness in relation to the above questions. These related and overlapping questions and aims will now be explained in more detail.

Chapter One begins the process of addressing these questions by outlining the divisions that existed, and to a large extent still exist, between those working in Film Studies, who adopt 'textual' or apparatus approaches, and empirical media and cultural studies researchers. This split can be characterised to some extent as 'psychic' versus 'social' or 'cultural' approaches. Dominant theoretical paradigms and concepts from film theory, communication studies and empirical media research are outlined and evaluated. I begin with psychoanalytic film theories focused on the relationship between looking, the cinematic apparatus and gendered spectatorship. These are part of the legacy of the 'Althusserian theory of the subject' (Gaines 1999) and the important insights from feminist film theorists that

have challenged and developed these approaches are reviewed. Textual analysis as 'method' is also considered as it is used in film studies on one hand and in a range of media and cultural studies empirical audience research on the other. I explore text-based and other structuralist-influenced approaches to audience research and examine the tendency to reject the text in favour of concentrating on the viewing situation and the social categories that apply to the viewer such as class and gender as interpretive categories.

Chapter One also explores the impact of technological developments in home-viewing technology. These developments have had an effect on film theory, which was based on a view of cinema that is no longer sustainable in a post-cinematic era. Traditionally, cinema was the primary space for viewing films, as it was a distinct and unique space. Television viewing and cinema were distinct activities (Ellis 1982) but the divisions that had kept the cinema and the domestic viewing of films apart were changing and potentially collapsing due to developments in home viewing technology. The home is now an equally important space for viewing films. New technology such as *Sky Plus*, along with record, replay and time shift technology gives audiences a previously unimaginable level of control over programme selection. The relatively cheap cost of purchasing televisions and digital technology makes it possible to have televisions in every room of the house if the viewer wishes.

As Meyrowitz (1985) notes, the social space and routine of the domestic environment has been changed by television. The scheduling of broadcast television for instance shapes evening activity and people organise their week around television. This research addresses current concerns within media studies to understand the way television technology is being used by individuals. These technological developments to some extent form the bridge that enables an understanding of the relationship with texts and viewing practices psycho-socially, because they facilitate the development of relationships with texts. This chapter prepares the reader for what I suggest are possible ways of enhancing our understanding of the viewing experience.

This research offers a psycho-social approach to 'audience' research, and a central aim of Chapter Two is to introduce psycho-social perspectives as a means of dialogue between psychoanalytic and sociological approaches to audiences and knowledge production. This is a case study based empirical research project with viewers of films and television, predominantly in domestic contexts and it is informed by psychoanalytic theories and methods. Psychoanalysis, as Chapter One shows, has been used as an explanatory tool predominantly in film studies and visual culture to understand audiences with a specific focus on the role played by looking or the field of vision in the creation and re-creation of the subject. This research takes up this interest in the subject and subjectivity.

The term subjectivity, rather than identity, is the preferred term used within this research. Subjectivity is often used in opposition to the term identity, which is often theorised as the end product of social processes associated with power relations, discourses and disciplinary practices. Identity can be thought of as the consequence

of social roles such as class, race and gender and is derived from, and is a consequence of, the relationships people have with social institutions such as schools, work, and the state amongst others. Thus identity is the externally visible result of a long-term accretion process associated with being part of socially constructed groups. It involves processes of social recognition (or marginalisation and mis-recognition) and is therefore an intrinsically dialogic and intersubjective category.

Subjectivity, on the other hand, is the internalised, subjective and affective experience of those social roles. It is associated with the 'interiorisation' (Hollway 2009:217) of the external processes of identity, including the expectations, attitudes, values and ways of being, encountered in the social world. Subjectivity is, in part, the 'internal' experience of identity. I use subjectivity to highlight the inner responses, encompassing feelings, affect and emotion, to experiences and encounters in the social world in everyday life. I also take the position that subjectivity and identity are both features of an on-going, dynamic, inextricable constitutive relationship between the 'internal' and 'external' worlds. At times 'identity' may be the more appropriate term where social expectations and dispositions, associated with work for example, as seen in Chapter Six, are more salient. Where I use the term identity, it is to draw attention to particular social factors but I take the view that these social factors are always lived and experienced subjectively. So, where Identity appears subjectivity is also found. My use of the term subjectivity emphasises the relationship between the internal and the external worlds in a way that is often missing from accounts of identity.

I will explore this further in relation to theories of the visual, for instance semiotic theories, which understand visual images as signs, which create meanings for the viewer. The process of meaning however is not located in the image or determined by the sociological characteristics of the viewer but through processes of articulation between the image and the viewer that are 'mutually constitutive' (Hall 1999:310). Viewers are positioned socially through objective categories such as class, race and gender, which form the parameters and make certain readings possible. History and the discursive formation in which an image is viewed also have some bearing on interpretation, suggesting that meaning is not static or fixed but can change and develop over time. However, psychoanalysis (from a variety of traditions) explains that a dynamic unconscious, means that how viewers view is also influenced by inner psychic positions, which also impact on meanings that are made. Texts may suggest particular or dominant sets of meanings but subjects bring their own 'subjective desires' and 'subjective capacities' to the text 'which enable them to take up positions of identification in relation to its meaning' (Hall 1999:310). Subjectivity therefore is a process, formed in a relationship between text, viewer and wider social processes. 'Inner' unconscious processes and the objective 'outer' world both constitute the subject and this view of subjectivity indicates the psycho-social features of the research.

Psychoanalysis outside the clinical situation has traditionally been associated with forms of textual analysis as 'method', where psychoanalytic concepts and ideas

have been used to suggest patterns of identification and subject positions offered by the text. Culture, history and the social are addressed through reading the internal characteristics of the texts rather than through engagement with actual audiences. So questions of method are central to psycho-social research.

Recent years have seen the growth of psycho-social studies departments within the academy and it has been noted that the definition of the term is the cause of much debate (Layton 2004). Hollway (2008a) notes that many perspectives inform the psycho-social such as feminism, post-structuralism and critical forms of psychology and sociology. There has also been a rise in the number of researchers utilising various psychoanalytic ideas and methods in empirical work. My own perspective utilises a range of psychoanalytic concepts and ideas, predominantly object relations, with a particular view on the unconscious and the experience of reality. This is explored in chapters Two and Three. These perspectives have informed my position that psycho-social research is based on the acknowledgement of the existence of a dynamic, conflictual, anxiety and desire-provoking unconscious. From earliest infancy the child has an unconscious life. Reality and life events are given meaning in the light of on-going unconscious processes and the 'ph' spelling of the word phantasy to denotes its unconscious expressions (Isaacs 1943). An inner world that appears real exists for the infant and colours the way reality and experience is made meaningful. This is unique to each individual. The subject is also motivated by the need to prevent danger, harm and emotional discomfort. The social world provokes anxiety as the subject enters a world of already existing social meanings. Particular families respond to this and create their own ways of being (Reiss 1981; Layton 2004). The world is also experienced intersubjectively as the subject's inner worlds are affected by the unique inner worlds of others and, in turn, we affect others through processes of unconscious communication such as transference and projection. Past experiences colour the present and the subject works unconsciously on the events they encounter in the social world through processes of desire and the need to manage or reduce anxiety.

This research develops an approach I call psycho-social phenomenology as it is interested in the viewing *experience*. Following Kuhn (1985) and Hall (1999). I take the position that meaning is not restricted to consciousness. In fact this research is interested in those aspects of the viewing experience that confound rational understanding through language. Most people have had the experience of having powerful, often strange, disconcerting and exciting responses to films and television programmes. There is often only a vague awareness of what these affective responses might signify. I would argue this suggests there is an unconscious response that needs to be understood. My research begins from a position that does not dismiss textual analysis as a method but points to its limitations, arguing that it is important to work with actual audiences if we want to understand powerful subjective experiences.

Chapter One explains that psychoanalysis has often been rejected for its universalising tendencies or privileging of the unconscious at the expense of understanding the relationship between the social, cultural and identity. This research will show the value of uniting both psychoanalytic and social approaches.

It is important to note that the psycho-social perspectives posited here are facilitative in opening up dialogue between psychoanalytic and sociological / cultural approaches to audience research. The hyphen⁴ acknowledges that inner and outer are both separate *and* linked, 'such that the boundaries between inside and outside are fundamentally blurred and unstable' (Redman 2009:63). This approach does not reduce the individual to the social nor does it isolate the individual psychologically outside of the social. It is only by developing an approach that utilises insights from both approaches that I am able to address the puzzling experiences that developed into research questions. Chapter Two takes up my particular psycho-social approach to subjectivity, lived experience, gender and class in more depth, in particular the adaptability of object relations theory to questions of viewing.

The technological advances described previously suggest that the viewer is now in a position to form active, creative and often intense relationships with texts. Also significant are the ways in which viewing is carried out. I have chosen to adopt object relations to inform my research because it is especially useful in understanding relationships. Post-Kleinian Object Relations theorists hold a theory of a dynamic unconscious that differs from Freudian and Lacanian theorists. For instance, they place different emphasis on the role played by the mother in the infant's earliest experiences. This research values the revolutionary insights and conceptual developments found in Freud's work, but Chapter Two argues that the shift in emphasis away from biological drives, seen in Freudian approaches, to one that focuses on the object and relationship seeking aspect of experience is most productive for understanding viewers' relationships and responses to texts.

Object Relations theories acknowledge the unconscious, but they are also 'social' because they place relationships at the centre of 'self' and at the core of human self-experience (Gomez 1997). As humans, our survival, which has both physical and emotional components, depends not on the fulfilment or management of drives but on our relationships with 'others'. The self develops, and exists, within the context of relationships. Relationships can also be with objects, or things, such as the television or a particular text. Winnicott (1971) notably introduced the concept of the transitional object and illustrated important unconscious processes that take place when objects are used. Christopher Bollas has since been a leading theorist in exploring the psychic relationships with objects. Chapter Two explores his ideas in some depth, as his work shows how it is possible to think about viewing and particular texts as objects with which individuals have emotional, embodied affective relationships. For Bollas, objects come alive psychically in their *use* suggesting that viewing practices are as significant as the text viewed. I argue there is a relationship between the two that can be explored empirically.

⁴ Debate exists about the degree of separation between the inner and outer worlds. Frosh for instance refuses the hyphen and inner and outer as a tactic which allows the subject to be theorised as being 'run through by a series of forces ... 'both agent and structure, empowered and constructed by power'. See debates in special issue *British Psycho (-) Social Studies in Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* Vol 13 issues 4 December 2008

Whilst psychoanalytic theory is often based on clinical experience, this research attempts to ground object relations approaches to culture empirically. Craib, commenting on the work of Bollas and his search to understand what it means to be moved by cultural objects, locates this work on the 'phenomenological wing of psychoanalysis' (1998:10). This research is designed in the spirit of this desire to understand *experience* and the relationships with texts both consciously and *unconsciously*.

Object relations I would argue are not in opposition to sociological approaches which are concerned with the impact of social categories such as class, gender, race, and age on audience reception. However, psychoanalytically informed research does take issue with established and dominant paradigms which prioritise the discursive and linguistic determinants of knowledge production. For Craib (1989, 1988), sociological perspectives on emotion are limited, as they cannot account for strong affective reactions that are often embodied and felt but exist outside of language and cannot be articulated.

Social categories such as class and gender can also be approached psycho-socially. Social class has been an important interpretive category for media and cultural studies, particularly around questions of culture and the operation of social power and ideology. Cultural studies have provided important insights around the way in which everyday culture can be put to use, for example to resist power. This research takes up the idea of ordinary culture and explores other aspects of culture and how it is put to 'use'. I decided to return to social class and chose interviewees who have working class backgrounds. Chapter Two explores the work of Bourdieu and Beck, as both provide important commentaries on social class. Bourdieu is interested in the role culture plays in maintaining social class divisions and hierarchies. Bennett et al (2009) have recently evaluated his work in a comprehensive review of contemporary British culture. They maintain that patterning associated with cultural usage and class is still apparent. In contrast Beck argues that social class has changed and that culture is marked by individualisation and self-reflexivity.

For Bourdieu, cultural choices are governed to some degree by economic reality, so working class people's choices are largely governed by necessity and need. However, Bourdieu does not theorise the emotional costs associated with this. Theorists such as Sennett and Cobb (1972) have argued that this is an emotionally painful experience and that class as 'lived' can be extremely difficult. Beck characterises 'new' modernity as one marked by risk, and the attempts to manage risk, which suggests life to be anxiety provoking. In the past many working-class (and middle-class) people had a degree of job security, with some fairly certain of a 'job for life'. This is increasingly being replaced by flexible labour practices where individuals are expected to change employment or re-train and there has been a growth in temporary, uncertain contracts. Disturbing for all, the trend towards re-training and flexibility, however, benefits the educated and professional classes with greater skill and economic resources. For both Bourdieu and Beck, culture and class are linked. For the former, the group remains important (Bennett 2009) and for the latter the definition of the individual within the group is significant. Television

viewing is established as a favoured activity of the working classes because of economic constraints on going out to the cinema or restaurants for example.

This research presents a snap shot of the experiences of working-class people and their use of an aspect of culture in the light of some of these social and historical developments. Each interviewee was born into a working class family defined in terms of income, parents' employment and educational trajectory. Materially, each lives a comfortable life enjoying home ownership, although for some there are job insecurities. The interviewees' different ages allow an in-depth examination of the experience of social change historically and its relationship to viewing. For example, Bill and Chris have both experienced social mobility moving from working-class backgrounds into middle-class employment via education. Bill, however, experienced his move through being a 'scholarship boy' and attending a grammar school. Chris was part of a younger generation, who with the growth of new universities in Britain, was part of a move to widen participation in higher education for working-class people. The case studies show how viewing cannot be abstracted from the way experiences, such as social mobility, are lived.

Chapter Three takes up the issue of methodology and the production of knowledge that accounts for experience. This chapter argues that it is not possible to produce psycho-social knowledge whilst working within the confines of established research practices; particularly those associated with positivist research methods.

Philosophical debates concerning knowledge production are considered. Building on a number of 'language' based approaches, this chapter argues that there are unconscious forms of communication in operation in social situations between subjects which traditional language based approaches may not account for. Theories of unconscious communication have an effect on the way in which researchers might conceive objectivity and self-reflexivity in research. The discussion is also based on a psychoanalytically informed account of reality and the way it is perceived, drawing on object relations theories in particular. Traditional approaches to interviewing in media audience research are explored and Free Association Narrative Interviewing is offered as an effective method for psycho-social interview-based research. This chapter sets out important frameworks that inform data interpretation in the case study chapters. A piece of audience research is evaluated and this is used to illustrate that psycho-social methods can bring together, what have often been opposing positions together in a fruitful way. The chapter also describes the sample, and practical issues such as ethical clearance and consent.

Chapter Three explains that *depth* is a key concept for this research because it is only through the detail gained in long interviews that it is possible to make more general claims about the viewing experience. Originally I had started the project with the idea of doing double in-depth, long interviews with 20 people, which I considered to be a small sample. It became apparent that the project would become unmanageable and unworkable for a PhD thesis had I continued with this goal. Issues arising from this about sample size and issues around generalising data are dealt with in Chapter Three. Principally, I argue that it is possible to make broad

claims from a small sample without the data necessarily being statistically generalisable. Case study research concerned with experience does not require a large sample. I settled therefore for three men and three women across the age ranges of one man and one woman in their twenties, one man in his late thirties, two women in their forties and a recently retired man. The details and rationale are explored in Chapter Three. Principally, this concerned the need for depth as a means of understanding the emotional and biographical significance, attachment and relationships with texts and viewing practices.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present and analyse the research data. Here, I want to introduce some of the reasons for the presentation of the data and the groupings. Each chapter introduces the interviewees through the use of a 'Pen Portrait' incorporating relevant biographical information and significant events given in the interviews, which inform the interpretation of data. Chapter Four features Sue and Mary, two mothers of sons and both in their mid-forties. This chapter re-visits concepts, such as identification, which have been central to film theory and also some media audience research. The work of Bollas, introduced in Chapter Two, is important to the approach this thesis develops as he offers an account of the psychic processes that take place in object selection. His work is important because it takes account of past experience and memory and the way this impacts on object choice and use. Significantly, Bollas pays attention to the 'character' of the object as something active that interpellates, in a unique form of unconscious stimulation, which makes the user want to put the object to both conscious and unconscious 'use'. This is discussed in relation to the 'aleatory' power of objects. Chapter Four also demonstrates two forms of identification present in the object selection of particular film texts: idiomatic and biographical. This form of identification can turn a text or a specific moment in text into what I will call 'impact' texts. Powerful emotional responses or forms of identification cause the image to become lodged in the viewer's memory and the memory of this moment or subsequent viewings generate and repeat these strong affective and mnemonic responses.

Along with psychic uses described by Bollas this chapter suggests ways in which viewing is used in thought or, in Bion's terms, how viewing is used for 'linking' purposes (Bion 1962/1984). This chapter also enhances our understanding of identification by demonstrating examples of intergenerational and sibling identification with texts. Traditional Freudian models of identification focused on the vertical parent-child relationships often neglecting lateral sibling relationships. In fact, siblings in psychoanalysis, until recently had been a much neglected category (Coles 2003; Mitchell 2003; Agger 1998). The emotional impact of the arrival of siblings is experienced on many levels and popular cultural texts are important spaces used in fantasy and both conscious and unconscious meaning making. This study provides a wealth of evidence to understand how texts are used in this way as well as suggesting further avenues for conceptual research within film and media studies.

Chapter Five features Sophie and Daniel. In terms of 'fan culture' (discussed in Chapter Two), Sophie and Daniel adopt practices which, more than any of the other

interviewees, suggest they can be defined as 'fans'. They are both examples of active and creative users and consumers of popular culture. Cultural studies and media audience research influenced by this tradition has often interpreted this kind of active audience behaviour through discourses of celebratory resistance, and more recently, self-reflexivity. This chapter, utilising psychoanalysis, suggests that there are limits and problems with this position. Psychoanalysis suggests that human existence and everyday life is marked by disappointment, trauma, anxiety and pain associated with the reality of living. In this chapter I explore certain practices associated with viewing which are difficult and problematic for interviewees. Daniel, for instance, is a single man who structures his life around work and viewing. The evidence in the data suggests that this is a defensive strategy responding to the fact of his existence as a single man, which I discuss through Bollas's (1995) idea of conservative object use.

Working-class audiences have been pathologised in the past (see Walkerdine and Blackman 2001) and, for a writer such as Postman (1985), the audience is addicted to television, unable to discriminate and separate fact from fiction. Politically conscious researchers have necessarily been suspicious of any approach that suggests a negative view of the audience. This chapter illustrates the complexity of processes involved in viewing practices, arguing that views of the audience that do not embrace celebratory paradigms are not necessarily pathological. It is possible to avoid tendencies to pathologise if we prioritise understanding the meaning of particular practices for individuals.

Sophie's 'active' and repetitive use of particular texts can be understood through the concept of repetition compulsion. Her study illustrates the way texts can be used in mourning, as they can provide the raw material which can then be incorporated into repetition scenarios to help deal with traumas. This case study also illustrates the way traumatic events are treated symbolically and subject to unconscious processes. The study of Sophie illustrates that sometimes viewing is not always pleasurable, as 'pleasure' has conventionally been understood in media and fan studies. The concepts of trauma and of repetition scenario are utilised to explain why an individual would choose to repeatedly engage in an activity which they are aware might make them feel 'bad'. This research evaluates the use of a range of psychoanalytic concepts and their use in cultural research. Daniel's study, for instance, allows reflection on key concepts from object relations theory which have, in recent years, been adopted by some media theorists such as Roger Silverstone (1994) to suggest that the 'television' provides ontological security. Concepts such as this can be used to reflect on ideas central to media studies around what it means to be active and creative audience members.

Chapter Six pairs a retired man Bill, with a young man, Chris. Both have shared a journey of social mobility from working-class backgrounds and through higher education into professional jobs. For both, the appreciation of films in particular is declared to be an important part of their identity. Unlike the 'fan' spectator, however, these men adopt and perform an identity that marks them out as distinguished and educated. On first glance this may seem to confirm the

sociological analyses connecting taste and social class found in the work of Bourdieu. The men approach film intellectually, as cineastes, distinguished by powers of critical appraisal and I discuss this as forms of cultural capital. However, what these case studies show in their different ways, is that this can never be understood purely in the social terms associated with 'identity'. Taste and class are lived psycho-socially, consciously and unconsciously, and this is not always an easy relationship. In particular, the studies help in understanding the impact of some of the social changes proposed by writers such as Beck. Films, the very items chosen for pleasure, or for an expression of individuality, can be used in such a way that they become anxiety provoking. In response, defensive forms of viewing are adopted. This challenges the conventional understanding from film theory concerning the way in which forms of anxiety are assuaged through narrative and cinematic techniques. This chapter builds on ideas introduced in the method chapter as it examines the dynamics between the researcher and research subject and illustrates the way unconscious communication can be utilised in data analysis.

Chapter Seven offers some concluding reflections on the research. This chapter returns to the original questions concerning viewing and the emotional attachments and responses in relation to texts as well as reflecting on viewing practices in the light of recent technological developments. It reflects on the appropriateness of psychoanalytic concepts for use in audience research. I also review social and psychic theories of object selection and use found in the work of Bollas and Bourdieu and offer some final thoughts on psycho-social methods and case study work, as well as suggestions for future research.

Viewing is a rich, creative, powerfully affective and emotionally laden experience. It can also be a distracted, routine, difficult and boring activity. This research provides a detailed account of the relationship viewers have with texts and viewing practices and illustrates the importance of personal meaning in understanding 'reception' and the significance of the activity. Throughout the case study chapters, the links are made between biographical experiences unique to the historically situated individual and the impact of wider social processes and the ways in which texts and practices can sit at the interface of both psychic and social meaning making processes. It is this move between the individual, who has an inner world, and society or outer reality, combined with a method that can access emotional experience and meaning, which characterises the psycho-social approach taken in this research.

CHAPTER ONE

FILM THEORY AND MEDIA AUDIENCE RESEARCH IS IT TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH?

In the previous chapter I outlined the genesis of this research project. I described a series of questions that emerged in response to my lived experience of viewing in a working-class family. I explained that I found film theory as well as media audience research had offered compelling, if incomplete, explanations. Although both disciplines were interested in audiences and the activity of viewing, in practice their approaches were quite distinct and rarely in productive dialogue with one another. Film theory is wedded to textual analysis as a method and media audience research over time moved away from reception studies concerned with decoding texts and became more focussed on context and uses.

It can be argued that psychoanalytically informed approaches such as those found in cinematic 'apparatus' models have dominated film theory (see Mayne 1993). Television researchers rejected this in favour of sociological explanations of viewing. Whether the research was concerned with readings or de-coding abilities, as seen in Morley's *Nationwide* study (Morley 1992, O'Shaughnessy 1999) or the activity of viewing in the home (Morley 1986, Gray 1992, Van Zoonen 1994), researchers were interested in the way membership of sociological categories such as class, race and gender impacted on interpretation and shaped viewing practices and relations between viewers. I explained that I valued this work, but still found gaps and I will argue throughout this research that theoretical exclusivity is not always desirable. It is possible to formulate an approach that can bridge the gaps between text and audience and psychoanalytic and social interpretive models. In this review I will examine the way audiences and viewing have been theorised around the enduring themes of identification, 'meanings', the ideas of pleasure, escapism, taste, and the impact on the viewing subject of technological and social change.

This chapter reviews significant literature from film theory, media and cultural studies audience research to illustrate the spaces into which this research makes an intervention. Following a brief contextualisation of the research question in preparation for the review of literature, the first part covers film theory examining dominant models and important critiques from feminist film theory. The second part covers developments in empirical media audience research where the 'text' is replaced by 'uses'. The chapter then concludes with a section detailing perspectives on viewing in domestic contexts and the effects of technological developments.

1.1 Texts that leave an impression

Most individuals enjoy viewing films and television programmes. Out of the plethora of available texts a small number become 'significant'. As this research shows, significant texts are often only *moments* from a film or programme, a visual image perhaps or particular instance of plot development. This moment is often stored as a memory and is distinguished by an association with an ill defined, unexamined and often surprising emotional impact at the time of viewing. Kuhn

(1995) argues that emotional responses have been neglected in media and film research and this research addresses this omission.

Other texts become 'favourites' over time and they are returned to for repeated viewings and I will explore some of the forms these strong attachments to particular texts take. In some film research the idea of repeated viewing has been associated with the pleasures and fascinations of the experience of cinema (Mulvey 1988). In media and cultural studies research being a 'fan', of a particular genre, soap opera or science fiction for instance provides pleasure on a number of levels. Pleasure begins with the texts but can extend beyond the text into fan communities for instance (Harrington and Bielby 1995; Stacey 1994; Hills 2002).

There is evidence in my data of viewing particular texts as immensely pleasurable experiences, but equally I have found that where 'favourite' or 'impact' texts are concerned there can also be an element of dis-pleasure. I use this term to question traditional assumptions of 'pleasure' and by dis-pleasure I am referring to the fact that some viewings are associated with emotional struggle and in some cases trauma. The basis of this is often biographical. I will show in later chapters however that viewers do not seek out texts in order to feel *bad* (although this may be a consequence of viewing), they are being used for emotional work in the hope of promoting change. With the exception of research on fans there have been few studies that have been able to offer theories that explain why certain texts, and *also* certain viewing practices become important and are invested in. Just as emotions have been neglected there has not been enough work undertaken on the nature of attachments to media texts (Redman and Whitehouse-Hart 2008) and viewing practices.

Jenson argues that strong attachments to texts, or celebrities, has often been theorised as examples of pathology and deviance, personified in the figure of the 'obsessed individual' (1992:9). Fans, for writers such as Postman (1985) are symptomatic of the wider deterioration of society associated with the growth of television viewing. Horton and Whol (1956) characterise the relationship between the media and audiences as 'para-social interaction' (1956). Attachment here is based on using viewing to form surrogate relationships, which replace face-to-face interaction. Writers such as Beck, discussed later in this review, have charted the social and cultural impact of developments leading to increasing individualisation in late modernity. Traditional forms of social interaction have changed, impacting on relationships within families and traditional forms of community, and this research explores some of these changes and the way they affect the relationships with texts and viewing.

Approaches to fan attachment as pathology prioritise the rational over the emotional, (Jenson 1992:25) and emotion is only understood as deviance and a problem. In this research attachment is based on an understanding of object relations (see Chapter Two), which explores the attachments to texts and viewing practices as an emotional relationship which serves both psychic and social purposes.

As the introduction explained, the psycho-social has not been codified into a single distinct approach. Critical psychoanalytic approaches to film, in varying degrees, have attempted to theorise the psychic and the social together (see Hall 1999; Gaines 1999). The kind of work produced however relied on text-based approaches where the audience response was contingent on the text. Later chapters argue that textual analysis is a valuable method when used in conjunction with other methods, in this case interviewing. In part then, as this chapter and the next will show, method is an important part of the psycho-social approach I develop. This research straddles film and television texts and viewing simultaneously. I look at readings of specific texts as well as paying attention to context, which includes the viewing space plus the wider socio-historical context in which all viewers are located.

1.2 Psychoanalysis, film theory and ideology

All media research and film theory, even if it is not explicitly stated, addresses the idea of 'effects'. Film studies encompass a variety of approaches and forms of criticism such as those that focus on the social and historical significance of cinema (see Turner 1988). Formalist, neo-formalist and cognitive theorists such as Bordwell and Thomson (1979); Bordwell (1988); Thompson (1988) are interested in narrative and the cognitive skills and pleasures involved with reading films. They look at the way films play with expectations and deviate from narrative as well as their generic and stylistic conventions, rather than focussing on unconscious processes.

During the 1970s film criticism developed into a distinct body of work that became known as 'Film Theory' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988; Penley, 1988; Mayne, 1993). Mayne, (1993) argues it is impossible to understand 1970s / 1980s film theory without also understanding the connection between theory, politics and ideology with psychoanalysis as the tool uniting the three elements. Film theory developed a political 'project' (Lapsley and Westlake 1988) that responded to theoretical insights from structuralism around the relationship between culture and social change. The underlying assumption of this 'turn' to 'theory' (Anderson 1976) was that the working class were to blame due to their inability to 'come to consciousness' of their role as the historical agents of change, as predicted by Marx. Similarly, feminists wanted to understand why women invested in patriarchy. Theories of ideology and subjectivity, which utilised psychoanalysis, argued that *unconscious* processes were in operation.

The spectator was not a concrete individual located in particular socio-historical moments but came to be seen as an 'effect' of the text (Johnson et al 2004). It has been argued that to visit the cinema is a unique 'social' experience (Turner 1988). Psychoanalytic film theory developed after 1970 would also argue that cinema is a *uniquely psychic experience* (Baudry, 1970, 1975; Metz 1975, 1983; Mulvey 1988; Heath 1980, 1981; Cowie 1997; Hawke and Alister 2001). It is important to note that the ideological criticism discussed below credited film with an influence that far outweighed its *actual* influence in terms of audiences, who were deserting cinema (post 1950s) in favour of television (Turner 1988:95).

By the 1970s the majority of people were watching films and a variety of other programmes in the 'comfort' of their own homes. Cinemas in the 1970s were often seen as 'flea pits', cold and unpleasant places where many did not want to go. This was a time of falling audience figures. However the recent growth of multiplex cinemas which have attempted to create a pleasant environment and film 'culture', with refreshments, film quizzes and free film magazines, has contributed to the recent rise in film goers. Film remains most popular, however, with young people, with families and older people attending infrequently (Turner, 1988). Whilst cinema remains a popular leisure activity, the growth in video, DVD, home-viewing systems and digital channels specialising in films, makes the home a significant environment for viewing large numbers of both recent and 'classic' films. As I hope to show, film theory is now an anachronism really best suited to another era such as the 'golden age of Hollywood' cinema, pre-television in the 1930s and 1940s, where cinema was, in terms of audience numbers, much more of a 'mass' medium. The cinematic experience remains significant but film theory must adapt and change to encompass an understanding of spectatorship in relation to the more 'flexible' medium of television in the home (Buonanno 2008:70). I will discuss the impact of such changes below.

Althusser's theory of ideology seemed to offer answers to the questions around social change that were asked in the 1970s. Part of the political project was to 'expose' dominant and patriarchal ideology (Lapsley and Westlake 1988). This began in France in the journal *Cahiers du Cinema* and developed its particular psychoanalytic hegemonic paradigm in Britain in the journal *Screen*. Cinema was singled out as being a particularly effective ideological medium. It was argued that cinema was able to mirror Althusser's process of interpellation (Baudry 1970, 1975). Based on a reading of Lacan's 'mirror stage', Althusser argued that individuals have an 'illusory', or 'imaginary' relationship with the real conditions of their existence' (Althusser in Evans and Hall 1999). Ideology works by offering a series of subject positions that individuals identify with. These constitute the individual as a subject and are lived in everyday roles, positions and practices (Gurevitch et al 1982; Edgar and Sedgewick 1999). Cinema's success as an ideological medium relates to its ability to generate representations and, in turn, create subject positions, which interpellate individuals (Mayne 1993).

Film theory began by exploring 'looking', the central activity of cinema, and the 'specular' aspects of Freudian and Lacanian theory. Mulvey's paper *Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema* (Mulvey, 1988) is probably the most (in)famous example of 'apparatus', feminist, ideological analysis (see Bellour 1974, 1988 Metz, 1975, 1988). Mulvey explores aspects of *scopophilia*, which she argues is a basic Freudian sexual drive concerned with pleasurable looking at the human form. She combines this with an exploration of other subjectively powerful forms of looking such as voyeurism, and psychic defences and mechanisms which come into play for spectators. Mulvey pays attention to the ways in which looking becomes all the more intense because of the darkness of the auditorium. Drawing on Lacan (see below), she argued that cinema invites illusory and narcissistic identifications. The

camera positions the spectator as male, through a combination of formal devices such as *point of view shots* or eye line match, this goes hand in hand with what she describes as classical Hollywood narrative structures, which are always driven by the male hero's quest, concerns and viewpoints. According to Mulvey the male hero is an 'ego ideal' that the spectator narcissistically identifies with, as he has greater physical strength, wit and beauty than the average human. The spectator becomes absorbed when looking at this image on screen and this recalls the *jouissance* of the 'mirror stage' as described by Lacan. Lacan described this moment as 'pivotal' when the child first comes to recognise itself as an autonomous subject, and the image here constitutes and organises the child's vision of the world (Segal 1994:131). The child apprehends its own image in a mirror and obtains great pleasure from the image it in fact mis-recognises as perfect. This is an illusion as it is in direct contrast to the lived experience of bodily fragmentation associated with the young child's lack of development, which whilst it is pleasurable, it also causes anxiety. Lacan argued that throughout life narcissistic fantasies and illusory identifications are adopted as 'compensation' (Grosz 1990:32) and as a mechanism for coping with the anxiety associated with these feelings. Film theorists such as Mulvey (1988) were to argue that cinema provided a particular, intense, re-connection with this moment at the level of the unconscious.

Woman exists in cinema, as in patriarchy, as passive object. In film she invites pleasurable looking due to her 'to be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey 1988:62). Mulvey points to instances where the narrative halts to allow instances for (male) visual pleasure. She argues that cinematic pleasure is obtained as men project their fantasies onto the female where the woman's body is turned into a fetish. The camera is able to 'break up', or disavow the whole woman whose image signifies the threat of castration. This is done through the use of close-ups of both the face and other parts of the body such as breasts and legs, which for men offers sexual visual pleasure. Cinematic pleasure, as figured in 'classic film theory' is concerned with processes of subjectivity and sexual difference connecting with psychic processes associated with identity formation already in process, such as the Oedipus complex. In particular, woman as a visual image is associated with threats around castration.

The Oedipus complex explains the process by which anatomical 'sex' differences are linked to 'gender', which is socially determined. It posits a triangular structure and acknowledges that identity and subjectivity are formed out of powerful contradictory feelings of love and hate towards parental figures. Based on the male child, it provides an account of the focus of human desire. Principally the boy desires his mother. The child sees his father as a rival for his mother's affection and the father intervenes in the relationship between mother and child prohibiting the male child's sexual desire. This has a biological component associated with the physical organ of the penis. The child construes prohibition of his desire as the threat of 'castration' by his father. Ultimately this causes the boy to renounce his desire for his mother and identify with his father, thus accepting the important prohibition against incest. The child comes to identify with authority which resides

'symbolically' in the father / penis. This translates as the 'law of the father' and it is necessary for the entry into culture where the pleasure seeking aspects of the child's existence must be modified in response to reality. 'Masculinity' and 'femininity' become associated with particular attributes agency and activity with the former and passivity, castration and 'lack' of a penis with the latter (Grosz 1990:70). This focus on sexual difference made cinema an important area of intervention for feminist theorists who pointed to cinema as a space where these psychic processes associated with castration, desire, and identification were played out.

Bellour (1974, 1988) for instance, cites the 'law of the father' and argues that women function in the text as signifiers of male castration fears and fantasies. His theory is particularly problematic for women spectators as he argues only masochistic forms of pleasure can be obtained from the text. Woman is the 'problem' in the text because she signifies the threat of castration. Bellour's analysis of a scene from Hitchcock's *The Birds*, just prior to the female lead character being attacked by seagulls, is a close reading of thematic similarities and camera work. It is also a representative example of, what Rosen calls, 'controversial post-structural cinema semiotics' (1986:viii) because of the way female subjectivity is theorised as one based on masochism and passivity.

The segment is organised around repetition. This repetition and difference also correspond symbolically to sexual difference. Central to the analysis is the exchange of shots that correspond to looks between characters, pointing to the importance of point of view shots in the production of desire. Bellour describes a link between looking and being seen that is carried through the shots. The bird attack is symbolically an attack by the male lead character Mitch on Melanie and, in turn, Mitch stands in for the spectator. The bird, on behalf of Mitch and the male spectator, symbolically carries out the aggression. Bellour provides evidence of thematic similarities, as the bird becomes the carrier of the male character's look. Close-ups in particular scenes recall shots and close ups from earlier scenes which, in turn, link aggression with desire. In the sequence Melanie's looks indicate her own sexual desire and this transgression is punished with aggression, which also provides voyeuristic pleasure for the spectator and the auteur. A shot of Melanie's blood stained finger symbolically stands for her eyes and her punishment for a desirous look.

Cinema not only provides this visual pleasure, it also works continually to create ontological and existential security for the spectator, but at the level of the unconscious. Formal devices such as framing, camera work and continuity editing, e.g. *180° rule*, *shot reverse shot*, *establishing* and *point of view* shots, coupled with the darkened auditorium, work together to create a heightened visual and sensorial reality associated with the dream state and regression to earliest beginnings of psychic life (Oudert, Heath, Baudry, Metz op cit)⁵. These devices allow the spectator to familiarise themselves with each scene. They ensure the spectator does not

⁵ Salt (1977) criticised psychoanalytic theory by arguing against the importance given to devices such as shot-reverse-shot in suture theory, arguing they only operate consistently in a limited and relatively small number of films (about 20%).

experience disorienting jumps in space and that characters appear in the logical part of the screen. This creates visual and narrative security and annuls the threat of the 'unknown' beyond the screen. This 'threat' was theorised in ways based on Lacan's concept of 'lack' (Lapsley & Westlake 1988:73) a complex concept that relates to anxieties relating to a number of key moments in the development of the subject. Some are associated with the bodily fragmentation of the mirror stage, others the split and the limits placed on desire that accompany the entry into language, and also the experiential and imaginative knowledge or the order of the 'real', which exists prior to the child becoming a subject. The fears that haunt the subject and the desires that drive it always exceed the limitations of language. There is always an unfilled space or a gap. Films supply representations to suture the gap opened up by lack (Oudert, 1977; Heath, 1977); they come to 'stand in' for the excess, beyond physical need, and what the subject perceives it lacks, for instance, the blissful unity and state of abundance that precedes the mirror stage and drives the subject. A further complex component is added because, at the same time, this blissful state threatens to engulf the subject in a void of nothingness of non-existence prior to subjectivity in the order of the real. Cinema and film images provide the compensations and anxiety management that both Lacan's and Freud's theories posit.

1.3 Critical responses

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the depressing, monolithic, fixed male spectator models (Mayne, 1993; Cowie, 1999) and those models which posit woman's function in the narrative as the repository of male aggression with no feminine subjectivity of her own. Feminist psychoanalytic theorists developed more flexible models based on the idea of 'fantasy'. In particular, these models offered ways of thinking more positively about the pleasures for the female spectator informed by Freud's '*A Child is Being Beaten*' and a work by Laplanche and Pontalis, '*Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality*' (1968). It was argued fantasies involve the arrangement of objects, in a variety of configurations, enabling subjects to stage desire (Evans, 1996; Cowie, 1999) whilst the subject then looks on as in dreams. Laplanche and Pontalis (1968) described three 'original' fantasies that alone do not cause particular fantasies but provide a structure for all fantasies almost as a 'bottom line'. These fantasies deal with the core enigmas that confront the subject and are concerned with origins: the primal scene with the origin of the individual fantasies of seduction, with the origin and upsurge of sexuality, and castration fantasies which deal with the difference between the sexes. In particular, fantasy theory allowed theorists to think through the ways in which films offer *multiple* points of entry for identification in films. It was argued there was no automatic correspondence between identifications with characters of the same gender. The spectator's identifications could oscillate between differing characters or even objects and events within one scenario.

A good example of the broader approach 'fantasy' offered can be found in Cowie's readings of *'Now Voyager'* and *'The Reckless Moment'* (1999 Chapter Four). These readings encapsulate both the potential fantasy offers, as well as the limits in relation to a textual focus alone. Here, Cowie looks to the textual strategies adopted by films to create pleasure through the possibilities for desire and wish fulfilment. She argues that narratives embody possible wish fulfilment scenarios. Visual strategies adopted in films create 'forbidden' equivalences between characters. 'Visual substitutions' show the ways it is possible for films to facilitate forbidden desires, such as a shifting around the positions associated with the Oedipal scenario, and the transgression of prohibitions such as the incest taboo. Cowie shows how the films create a number of possibilities for female desire and, on one level, these relate to the key developmental moments Laplanche and Pontalis outline. At the same time they cleverly subvert existing social prohibitions of the day, in this case government censorship of 1940s films⁶. Although Cowie was able to offer a reading that incorporated social and historical aspects, it still lacked greater acknowledgement of the history that each individual brings to the film from outside the auditorium, which also changes over time (Mayne, 1993; Rose, 2001). The psycho-social approach I aim to develop in this thesis builds on this, by developing a method that is able to look at the complex relationship between the individual spectator's biographies, the history of the viewing moment as well as 'history' in the text.

Stacey's (1987) study *Desperately Seeking Difference* challenges the psychoanalytic models that focus on fetishistic, voyeurism or masochocistic identification in favour of one that is about differences between women, but this is not purely located at the point of sexual difference. This text problematises the idea of 'pleasure', showing it to be a contradictory process. She examines both the pleasures and dangers of spectatorship for women in two films, which feature women who desire other women in the text: *All About Eve* and *Desperately Seeking Susan*. It is the desire of *women* that propels the narrative, and even where there is some narrative punishment for women in the narrative, there are equally many moments when women's desire is realised. These films provide the female spectator with narratives and formal organisation that facilitates movement between positions of desire and identification, fulfilment and unfulfilment for female spectators showing how pleasure involves a range of complex often *contradictory* pleasures. This research will examine examples of this in the case study chapters.

Creed and others point out that film theory became 'pre-occupied' with 'Oedipal' and 'mirror stage' models and this precluded thought about other possible models (Creed, 1990; Mayne, 1993; Cowie, 1999). Rose (2001:132) argues psychoanalysis, as used in film theory, has little or nothing specific to say about race or class. In Gaines's study of *Mahogany* she argues: 'a theory of the text and its spectator, based on the psychoanalytic concept of sexual difference, is unequipped to deal with a film which is about racial difference and sexuality' (1999:12). Feminist theory based on female subordination by men obscures the oppression of black women by white men and women. Often it is white women who black women feel most

⁶ This can also be seen as an example of 'against the grain' reading where the text is able to 'subvert' dominant ideology. This approach was common in the pages of 'Cahier du Cinema'.

oppressed by. Gaines also challenges the ideas concerned with the camera and the male lead character, showing how often, black men are excluded or treated differently or subordinately by the camera to white males.

More generally, critics of psychoanalysis point to its culturally specific, generalising and phallogentric tendencies (Frosh, 1987; 1997, Mayne, 1993). With reference to Lacan, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the idea of a subject whose experience is characterised by illusion, mis-recognition and the need to search for narcissistic identifications (Castoriadis 1995). If all our encounters are based on mis-recognition is it possible to understand in any objective or meaningful way the relationship between socially situated individuals and their viewing? If we think of this in relation to film language and signification we could argue that, if all experience is based on mis-recognition, then the chain of signifiers is more important than the lived experience of spectators. As I will argue when I discuss the ideas of Bollas later, the form of a signifier is not unimportant. It tells us something about a particular individual's unique experience. To treat the idea of 'real' experiences, such as the difficulties of living with little money or the loss of self-esteem that accompanies not being able to read well, as less important, or of no consequence is, I think, a very dangerous and politically reactionary position that must be challenged. 'Lack' is always both 'social' and 'symbolic'. Psycho-social models can address this omission because they refuse to see the social as collapsing into the psychic and vice versa, looking instead at the ways in which the psychic operates on the social in a relationship where neither completely dominates the other. I will take this up in Chapter Two.

1.4 Media Audience Research: prioritising the social subject

Media and cultural studies audience research bifurcates into two strands; one asks questions about the meaning and interpretation of texts, the other shifts focus from the text and what the media 'do' to audiences and explores the opposing position, what audiences 'do' with the media. Experimental psychological effects research conducted under laboratory conditions pre-dated film theory and proposed a passive, simplistic model of the viewer. It is often based on a simplistic linear model of communication from sender to receiver (Laswell 1948). Links are made between what was seen on the screen and its influence on behaviour, and viewing was often thought to have a negative effect on behaviour (Barker, 1997). Bandura's, (1961) 'Bobo' doll experiment, for example, proposes a social learning theory arguing that what is seen on the screen (such as a child hitting a doll) has a direct influence on behaviour, as this will be replicated in reality. These concerns were usually directed at working-class people and pivoted on fears around the 'mass' audience and its possible negative behaviours in response to media output. Periodically, they re-emerge in the form of moral panics around sex, violence and morality (Walkerdine and Blackman 2001).

The Frankfurt school provide an early example of the critical use of psychoanalytic concepts to understand historically specific 'mass' audiences. Adorno (1991) and Horkheimer (1993) examined the role of the 'culture industry', most notably in an

analysis of the relationship between culture, audiences and the rise of fascism. This approach was also notable because it had a psychoanalytic component using concepts such as identification, ambivalence and projection to understand how audiences come to invest in totalitarian and fascist ideologies. Although a complex model theoretically, it presumes a passive undifferentiated audience but one which was appropriate to the serious political developments of the time.

The 'Uses and Gratifications' model historically represented a move away from psychological effects research, shifting the focus away from the idea of the passive consumption of individual texts. A much more optimistic view of the media was taken and questions were asked about the possible benefits of media use and television viewing in particular. Researchers sought to understand what was involved in the act of viewing (McQuail, 1987) and sociological ideas were incorporated. It was argued that television was used to meet pre-existing social needs (Klapper, 1960; McQuail, 1987). It was argued that television is a 'friend', particularly to socially isolated groups such as the elderly (Meyrowitz, 1983; McQuail, 1987). The media provide a form of escapism helping people to forget about the difficulties of everyday life but also providing a window on the world. Significantly, researchers argued that it was a means to *engage with one's own identity, emotional issues and conflicts* [my emphasis] (McQuail, 1987:73). Uses and gratifications research provides a useful list of reasons why individuals might watch television but it does not propose a rational conscious individual whose pre-existing social needs take priority. I will discuss some of the ways media and cultural studies audience research has taken this project further below. This research takes up the idea of identity, emotion and conflict to argue that psychoanalysis is an important explanatory tool that can be used to understand how viewers subjectively engage with identity and emotion, and this presupposes that it is not possible to understand this purely socially. This involves taking the home seriously as a psychic, as well as social, space.

The growth in reception studies and ethnographic audience research was symptomatic of a shift away from the idea of effects and passive audiences to one much more interested in the interpretive and critical abilities of audiences, as well as the uses of media in every day life. Reception studies on the whole are divided between text-reader and product-user approaches (Wood, 2007). Hall's (1980) influential 'encoding/ decoding' model utilises structuralist perspectives to analyse the way meaning is created through the arrangement of language and visual images within a text, which are then decoded by social actors who are socially, culturally and historically located in society. Three types of readings or forms of decoding are posited in relation to ideology encoded in the text: the dominant or preferred, the negotiated, and the oppositional reading. This was tested empirically in a range of research projects, most notably Morley's *Nationwide* study (Morley, 1992), which explored the way ideology in texts, was negotiated. *Nationwide* was concerned with the relationship between types of readings or 'de-coding abilities' (Morley in O'Shaughnessy, 1999:59) and social characteristics of the audience such as class. He explored how the same programme was interpreted by individuals from different social backgrounds 'with a view to establishing the role of cultural frameworks in

determining individual interpretations' (Morley 1992). Morley adopted a method that incorporated both 'text' and 'audience' as it began with an analysis of the encoding of the programme before engaging with audiences' de-coding abilities. Often criticised for its focus on the political / ideological, this study and others that followed (see Liebes, 1997; Miller, 1995; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Ang, 1985) showed that viewers did not engage with texts uniformly. Oppositional and negotiated readings incorporate both cultural background and life experience and, as I will argue in this research, this necessitates another type of reading, one which can incorporate an 'emotional' reading of the text where meaning is made in relation to an emotional agenda that the reader may unconsciously (and consciously) bring to the text. As I will go on to show, other processes might also be taking place in the process of viewing which need to be considered, and this research attempts to understand the combination of social decoding and unconscious interpretation of meaning.

Family Television (Morley, 1986) represents the product user shift. The text and textual analysis became less important for Morley as the focuses shifted from meaning and the text to the 'how' of television as an activity whilst retaining an interest in questions of power. Morley acknowledges that his work lacks a psychoanalytic perspective and he concedes that this closes off possibilities for understanding investments and fantasies that exceed any rational interpretation of a text. A range of other studies interested in the micro-politics of viewing (see Morley, 1986, 1992; Gray, 1992) such as gender relations between viewers in individual families and the relationship between gender and technology, pointed to media use as a site of power. Gender was shown to influence who has control over an evening's viewing for instance (usually males who controlled the remote control) but Gray's research showed how women are able to negotiate this to find space for their own viewing pleasures. She also focussed on the experience of using media technologies like video. As Woods (2007) research demonstrates even in the current digital era where each viewer potentially can move between platforms to personalise an evening's viewing, gender still influences the process of negotiation where people attempt to view together.

Jancovitch (1992) points out that the growth in ethnographic research on use completely relegates the possibility of a text having any influence whatsoever on meaning, which he sees as a dangerous move. Many of the themes exemplified by Morley, Gray, Wood et al's work are revisited in this research; power and control over programme selection, styles of viewing, planned and unplanned viewing, television related talk, solo viewing, guilty pleasures and taste (see Morley, 1992). I take up Jancovitch's concern with the relegation of the text and adopt a method that incorporates textual analysis. I include objective readings of texts, as Morley did in *Nationwide*, to identify preferred readings as well as those readings of my interviewees, exploring where appropriate, an emotional or biographical reading. I will show how reading texts forms part of a process of a triangulation of evidence with interviews and forms of unconscious communication. This will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter. A significant strand of ethnographic research claimed that the family and gender are essential factors determining the viewing

experience (Morley, 1985; Gray, 1992; Van Zoonen, 1994). The following section explores the family, home and viewing in more detail.

1.5 Conditions of viewing: family and home, technological and social change

Television is a pervasive feature of postmodern industrialised societies with screens and images everywhere. Television has been defined principally as a domestic medium (Ellis 1982) and broadcasting was traditionally organised around the idea of the nuclear family. Clearly, this is currently undergoing rapid change but this research will focus primarily on viewing in the domestic medium, looking at individuals who live in families as well as single viewers who live alone. In the past the domestic has also been linked to ideas of 'family' and 'home' (Meyrowitz, 1985; Lull, 1990; Morley, 1992; Tester, 1998). Ethnographic studies confirmed that television viewing was linked in complex ways to power struggles within the home (Morley, 1986; Walkerdine, 1986' 1992; Gray, 1992; Ang, 1996) and was often a site around which conflict and bids for dominance emerge (Goodman 1983). Women were shown to adopt a variety of techniques, such as pleading ignorance around the use of new technologies to resist taking on extra domestic responsibilities (Gray 1992). Interviewee Sue (Chapter Four) occasionally goes to the cinema alone and she chooses to do this as she is often called on to perform domestic duties when she tries to watch a film at home. Daniel prefers to view films at home as he dislikes cinema protocol and finds home-viewing more 'relaxing'.

As I have suggested, film theory based on the cinematic experience also falters in the light of recent developments in home-viewing technology. Record-replay and 'time-shift' technology such as video, DVD, along with computers with DVD play facilities and home-viewing cinema systems have replaced cinema going as the main mode for viewing films. It is not always necessary to catch films when released, as viewers do not have long to wait before the film is available on DVD. Most films, even if viewed for the first time at the cinema, now find their way into the home either through a television screening or on video / DVD. In relation to films, for many viewers there will be films that become favourites that will never have been seen on the 'big screen'. In the past, films screened on television were part of an 'event', such as the Christmas Day movie. Unlike today, where digital channels such as 'Film Four' offer multiple broadcasts of the same films each week, in the past, if people wanted to see a film again they were reliant on television and they had to wait for it to be broadcast for a second time. This changed as people were able to buy videos / DVDs, and for the first time, viewers were able to build a unique relationship with filmic texts as they were in control of viewing.

Having the television switched on has been viewed as a neutral backdrop to everyday life (Silverstone, 1994). Meyrowitz, (1985) and Thompson (1995) have argued this is not so, and that the television has altered and reshaped the social significance of space within the home. Television scheduling, for instance, has been associated with structuring the evening, or even the week of the average family (Ellis, 1989, 2000; Paterson, 1990). Families sit down to eat when a particular favourite show is on and they may move from eating around a table to a tray on

their lap. Crucially, Meyrowitz and Thompson have argued that television has impacted on social and self-identity.

There are some important implications arising from the ideas of Meyrowitz (1985), who cites television as a form of technology that has radically altered time and space relationships. Meyrowitz argues that television has a wide-scale impact, as it constitutes society on a new basis, radically altering public and private space and social interaction. Particular texts are able to set agendas for conversation, knowledge and the way the social world is understood. Everyday life, particularly in the home, becomes structured around habits and routines that arise from the act of viewing. Formally distinct situations and worlds are collapsed into one (1985:92). Politics enters the home and the viewer can enter the private life of those in power seen for example in news broadcasts of 'the President at home'.

The growth of reality television is one example of the ways the 'private and isolated behaviours have been brought out into the large unitary public arena' (Meyrowitz, 1985:309). Electronic media have the ability to bring groups of people together in ways that would be impossible in face-to-face interaction. Williams (1974) describes the way television makes the viewer 'mobile'. From the privacy of their own home they can be transported into a variety of other private or geographical locations. Private relationships become changed such as the relationship between adults and children because of the loss of taboo. In the cinema age restrictions shield children from films with content deemed adult, but television cannot be regulated in the same way. Television does attempt to implement some form of control from the 'warning this programme contains...' to the gpm watershed, but this only entices children to watch (Meyrowitz, 1985). Children, through a range of genres from drama to documentary, are exposed to a variety of adult topics such as sex, crime, drugs and violence. In many ways it is this that forms the basis of concern that generates and justifies media effects research projects on children's viewing. Chapter Four presents examples of children viewing adult material on television and explores the way in which the fear generated in response to the text emerges out of the child's reality which *meets* the text.

Ellis (2000) explains the importance of scheduling to the television industry, as it is economically essential for broadcasters to capture an audience for the entire evening to sell advertising space or justify the license fee. Following this, Beck (1992) notes that rituals form around viewing from the evening news and the regular viewing of soap operas to the classic example of the Christmas Day '*Morecambe and Wise Show*' or Queen's speech.

For supporters of public service broadcasting systems like Habermas, having universal access to good quality, independent information is essential for democracy to flourish. Beck, though not a theorist of television frequently refers to television in his work and he is less positive about the potential for television to form part of a democratic public sphere as he argues television 'isolates and standardises', removing people 'from traditionally shaped and bounded contexts of conversation, experience and life' (1992:132). Global processes also standardise and there becomes a 'uniformity and standardization of forms of living' where 'everyone

sits isolated even in the family and gapes at the set' (ibid). Postman (1985) is equally concerned that people are 'amusing' themselves to death as he sees television as responsible for blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. Television, therefore, is not always assessed positively in terms of its social effects. These theories, however, are based on a particular moment when most homes only possessed one television set and channels were limited. This 'broadcast television' era has now almost been completely superseded by the digital age of multi-channel, multi-platform and narrowcast viewing.

Televisions are cheap to buy and most households today possess numerous sets, even those who might be considered economically disadvantaged. There are also many possibilities for viewing television programmes and films, for example, on computer screens. It is now possible to argue that the kinds of conflicts - such as whose choice of programme prevails, or who has control of the remote control, - would be diffused by this greater possession of televisions. It may be the case that conflict might still exist over the control of the main set if it is the most technologically sophisticated. Viewing has, on the whole, become more individualised as family members retreat to different rooms and it is possible that fewer family or group viewings now take place. This suggests that the nature of 'living room wars' (Ang 1996) might be changing and that there is greater need to explore both individualised viewing and also the experience of viewing in different locations and on different technology within the home.

In exploring his observations on the growth of individualisation and risk society Beck notes the trend in the use and consumption of cultural products and cultural forms in reflexive projects of the self (1992 Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). These are used to manage the risks associated with the flexible organisation of what he calls a 'new modernity'. Individualisation is accompanied by changes in tradition and social organisation. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim the traditional family is 'in decline' (2001:22) and family becomes less significant as individuals are forced to move away and form new groups for care and support. This move is represented in texts such as *Friends* and *Will and Grace* and is explored in Chapter Five where we meet Sophie for whom 'family' are relegated in favour of 'friendships'. Society is no longer marked by the return to 'family values' of the 1980s in Britain. The 21st century is characterised by 'individualism' and 'diversity' (2001:23), which contrasts with his earlier views of television and its ability to standardise. Individuals must make themselves out of the globalised and standardised products they encounter.

The family and gender have changed because the 'ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement' has become the 'most powerful current in modern society':

The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:23)

Elliot and Lemert (2006) also argue that individual identities have become privatised and I would agree that new technologies - like those mentioned from *Sky Plus* to

home cinema and the Internet - have opened up new possibilities and 'alternative paradigms' for social life. For Elliot and Lemert, 'the main legacy of this cultural trend is that individuals are increasingly expected to produce context for themselves. The designing of life, or a self-project, is deeply rooted as both social norm and cultural obligation' (2006:x).

Genre, for example, can no longer be understood entirely in terms of the properties of the text, similar styles or iconography. New popular genres develop from and respond to social and cultural change. The current trend in lifestyle programming and other genres such as infotainment, often told through a personal narrative format, illustrates this move. Designing a home, lifestyle and even a new body is illustrative of this positioning the individual as part of a self-reflexive and symbolic project (Thompson, 1995). According to Thompson, experience and our self-identity are now based on and formed through, 'non-reciprocal' intimacy, one-way relationships with symbolic materials we encounter through the media (1995:219). Thompson stresses the importance of understanding the ways in which media messages are incorporated into the lives of the viewers and how they become 'part of their project of self-formation' and they are used in the 'practical contexts of their day to day lives' (1995:214), suggesting that texts and content, as well as the practical act of viewing should be explored - as this research does.

Beck's theory is explicitly a theory of the 'ego' as he argues that contemporary society is 'ego-centred' (1992:136.). The ego performs reflexive, decision-making functions. Cultural products are used cognitively to define the 'individual' as an '*individual*', rather than as part of a class, as Bourdieu proposes (see below). Beck's ideas, on the surface, do not seem to point to the need for psychoanalytic explanations. However, Beck is clear that the processes he describes are extremely anxiety-provoking, suggesting that his theory of individualisation lends itself to psycho-social understanding. Chapters Five and Six present examples of viewers who actively use viewing and build relationships with particular texts to address anxiety and trauma.

Although face-to-face and other traditional forms of social interaction may have radically altered, this research explores the idea of 'relationships' with texts and viewing as examples of responses to some processes of individualisation. This also allows us to understand the effects of Beck's thesis psycho-socially in the attempts to reduce anxiety and fear. Questions arise such as: can the forms that viewing take be seen as symptomatic of the move into the private world of the 'new individual?' How significant are more established views of the effects and uses of television? The stereotype of the couch potato, for instance, captures the person who lives to watch television but at the same time is happy to let television wash over him. In Daniel (see Chapter Five) we see an individual who acknowledges that he fills his free time watching television. But what do we know about the subjectivities of people who spend a lot of their time watching television? What do intensive viewing practices mean?

The sample presented in the introduction represents a snapshot of the viewing practices and tastes of a group of working class people who have witnessed the emergence of a broadcast technological age which can now also be thought of as changing into a 'digital' and post-cinematic era. These people also occupy various positions in relation to the social and cultural changes such as upward and other forms of social mobility. This research also examines the impact of these changes on viewing and textual identification. Most children born today will never know what it means to live in a house with only one television set and three channels to choose programmes from. All of my interviewees remember television as an 'event'. Mary recalls watching the FA Cup Final with her extended family packed into one room. Daniel recalls Christmas Day viewing *Noel Edmonds Christmas Day Special* with the family. Today's children will not experience having to negotiate viewing when only one television was available, but may also miss out on the *intimacy* associated with family viewing that all my interviewees remember with fondness. Sophie has happy memories of having a bath on Sunday evenings and the family watching *The Muppet Show* together. Chris recalls his enduring love of slapstick comedy starting with a season of Jerry Lewis films on television, watched after school, which various family members would 'dip in and out' of. He liked the films but the pleasure was also that they were viewed against the rhythm of the house:

We wouldn't always sit down and watch them together but my family would always be about. It does make me think of family 'cause if I was sitting watching that, my Dad would probably just be coming home from work and he'd come in when I was watching it for example. And me Mum'd be buzzin about doin' something. (Chris)

Watching television at home is often 'distracted viewing' but this does not always lessen the intensity of the impact of a text, as I will show in later case studies. The home, clearly, is different to the cinema as there are no behavioural protocols (Daniel doesn't like the cinema for this reason). However, viewing takes place where family relationships and all the histories and emotions associated with these relationships are played out and lived. For Chris, the family just being around created a rhythm and a backdrop against which viewing took place. This is incorporated into his reading and use of particular texts, and I will show that this has strong connections to the way in which Chris views as an adult and influences the kind of text he chooses to view. Most interviewees make reference to the link between particular texts and memories of family members and these memories are important and will be explored in the case studies.

The family and 'home' as a domestic unit and set of social arrangements which impacts on viewing is important. Psychoanalysis points to the psychic effects of family relationships on the individual and subjectivity. This dimension proved to be significant in the analysis. Home represents many things; it is a place where we can relax, a place of safety, joy and intimacy and at the same time it may be an intense and often oppressive place. In childhood home is the canvas where identity (from various psychoanalytic perspectives) is painted through processes such as the

Oedipus complex. At some point for most individuals home is associated with family. It is therefore a place where significant social and psychic developments and experiences occur. Television, as I will discuss below, is a domestic object that viewers have a relationship with. Television can operate as part of a process of relay (Walkerdine, 1997) through which difficult feelings and emotions can be articulated. It can be the backdrop that accompanies difficult life events. Seiter remembers watching soap operas while her mother was seriously ill and finding this gave her stability and helped her cope (interview in Brunsdon, 2000). Often the emotional highs and lows of a text chime with our own at particular times. Lacey (1997, 1999) recalls watching Hollywood musicals at home with the sounds of her family talking, and the smell of lunch cooking. Like the example given by Chris, these accounts touch on the importance of context but also raise questions about particular texts, such as what it is about the text that makes the viewer choose to use it in this way. Are there genres that lend themselves to particular 'uses', be these social or psychic? The following chapters address this aspect of the relationship with texts in some depth. I will also give examples of the way family members, siblings in particular, impact not only on our viewing memories, but also on processes of identification with texts (see Chapters Four and Six).

Empirical media audience research has concentrated on texts, readings and the uses of media technologies. A strand of media theory exists which maps the effects of technological developments and also attempts to capture the experience of viewing. Williams's (1974) concept of 'flow' has been a key concept for understanding the *experience* of television. Flow is the defining characteristic of broadcasting (Williams 1974) as a technology and a cultural form. The television experience is not one of viewing a series of disparate items but somehow the experience of television unifies these items into the same experience (Ellis 1982:117). The viewer moves through an evening's television in, what feels like, a seamless glide through one programme, through advertisements and adverts to the next. The viewer 'watches *television*' rather than individual programmes. Even if the viewer switches channel there is always the promise of something more to come that makes the viewer want to carry on watching.

Flow is the quintessential conceptual model for explaining television in the broadcast and public service era. As White (2003) notes, 'flow' has been subject to much revision since Williams first used the term. Developments in digital technology and electronic media suggest a new form of active viewing or 'viewing', which further disrupts the idea of group or family viewing associated with the pre-digital era. Technology opens up more and more possibilities for different relationships with favourite texts and more platforms offer a range of different experiences with the same text as a starting point. The growth of digital and time shift technology has seen a massive shift away from a mass to a 'diffused' audience (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998). Caldwell (2003) suggests that we are now 'viewers' who choose to navigate a range of textual spaces across a number of platforms (Wood 2007). Technology such as *Sky Plus* eradicates the now outdated power of the scheduler to suggest the pattern of the evening through television's flow and places control firmly into the hands of the individual viewer.

Prior to the proliferation of television, most experiences were based on face-to-face interactions. Now time and space are altered. We can live in hyperspace, we are connected to others thousands of miles away in an instant and we experience 'reality' through television screens and monitors. Today individuals can 'play' in a digital world of PC and other gaming technology and the visual is prioritised. There are numerous possibilities for viewing on computer screens, through the internet, on telephones as well as traditionally through the 'box', whose shape is changing radically to flat, space-saving plasma screens, or screens the size of an entire wall mimicking the cinema experience. Viewing a television programme in the home may involve a move between platforms beginning with the television then moving to a website, fan site or DVD. All these developments point to a move away from the passivity assumed by the concept of flow to an active audience.

Television has been discussed in terms of emotional responses. It is argued that television compresses space, displaying for viewers events they would normally never see, such as earthquakes and famine. The public world is brought into the intimacy of the home (Meyrowitz, 1985; Thompson, 1995). Events are both present and absent, where the relationship between physical and social place has become 'disconnected' (Meyrowitz, 1985:41) or 'disembedded' (Giddens, 1991). This 'situational segregation' (Meyrowitz, 1985:42) acts as a psycho-social 'shock-absorber' (1985:42) which allows us to become selective in our emotional response to events that threaten to overwhelm us.

Not only has space in the home been re-defined by television (and continues to be re-defined in response to technological developments in electronic media), but also television has altered self-identity with one particular effect being we are desensitised to emotion (Meyrowitz, 1985; Giddens, 1991; Thompson, 1995; Tester, 1998). Within any routine survey of television's output, at any time of the day, we find an array of emotions presented to the viewer from the highs of the game show winner to distressing stories of trauma. Tester (1998) argues that television's constant presentations of horrific realities make individuals both 'bored' and 'blasé'. Television offers viewers 'too much' stimulation, possibilities, pleasures, images and narratives that they must understand and make meaningful. Ultimately, he argues, this proves so difficult that viewers' powers of discrimination work less effectively. Rather than consciously engage with television, or use it to meet our needs (which we are fully conscious of as uses and gratifications proposes), we in fact 'sit back' and let television 'wash over us' (1998:90). For Postman (1985) television has turned the world into 'show business' and he questions the viewers' ability to distinguish between genres, reality and fiction. The world may have been brought into the home, but the blasé attitude means viewers only ever see it as an abstraction to be observed from afar. Tester also argues that this blasé attitude means that 'things and other people cease to matter to us'. Conversely, because we are here in this world and cannot survive social isolation, 'those things *have* to matter to us if we are going to be able to stand any chance of personal satisfaction and happiness (1998:91). So we are forced to continually seek out excitement, stimulus and

impressions which television is able to provide through its constant flow of images and 'its tradition of narrativity' (1998:92).

Tester offers one way of understanding the viewer's move through an evening's viewing as either seeking out or avoiding different emotional displays and experiences. Scannell (2007) agrees with Tester and argues that the nature of being human is being with and being concerned about others. He explores the experience of turning on the television set and argues that it is not possible to watch television 'objectively'. Viewers may be able to identify specific sounds and images viewers are unable to maintain this objective mode of perception. In fact, they move into 'concernful' seeing where what is seen is not simply images and sounds (objective seeing) but the news, or a film, or drama. Concernful seeing is linked to mood. The viewer is in the mood for a particular genre or programme or may reject a programme and move to another channel but in both cases the mood is indicative of being in a state of concernful seeing (2007:28). Viewers engage with the output, not the black box sitting in a corner. As long as television provides programmes, it is meeting the expectations of the viewer. It is only when the television does not work, because of a malfunction or disruption on to transmission, that we realise the existential centrality of television in people's lives, as viewers experience a range of emotions and frustrations. Unlike Meyrowitz, however, Scannell sees broadcasting not as a psycho-social shock absorber but as a medium that is able, through live news reporting for instance, to give meaning to experience even in the light of extremely difficult situations that confront the viewer. The 9/11 events, for instance, were brought together by news reporting to give the viewer a very basic framework from which to make sense of the events. This ultimately makes television a trustworthy medium (Scannell, 2007). Silverstone (1994) concurs with the issue of dependability of television, but with a slightly different psychoanalytic focus concerned with the way television provides a form of ontological security, discussed in section 2.6.

I have noted that the advent of new media technologies have allowed individuals and families to forge new and often intense relationships with texts. This was first explored in Walkerdine's (1986) study *Video Replay* that emerged as a piece of serendipitous media research. Walkerdine was actually involved in a longitudinal study of girls in education. She was observing a working-class family labelled as a 'problem'. As she sat in the family living room she observed the father using the VCR re-wind facility to repeatedly watch the violent fight scene at the end of *'Rocky II'*. Following this she offered a reassessment of what was involved in watching films. I would argue that this article represents one of the first pieces of empirical psycho-social media research. When *Video Replay* is discussed, two aspects are usually extracted. The first concerns the exploration of the theme of 'fighting' in the film *Rocky II*. In particular, the ways in which the fighting in the film narrative, resonated in the life of the working-class man featured in the study. Although this study looked at only one man, Dyer (1979) used the term 'resonance' to explore the way star images capture something of the society of their time. Stallone as 'star' in this film offers a version of physical masculinity as spectacle, class and individual determination in the light of the growing neo-conservatism of the time in both

Britain and the USA indicating that fantasies have both individual, personal resonance and link to broader discourses - in this case around the 'crisis' of masculinity. (see Bainbridge and Yates 2007 and section 2.7). The second theme was the examination of 'fantasy' via a psychoanalytic lens discussed above. This work also has implications for method as she uses an autobiographical mode, acknowledging her own feelings and memories, which illustrated the constraints psychic processes such as fantasy place on the idea of an objective reading of data (see Chapter Three).

Here, I want to concentrate on the relationship between technology and the viewing of texts. As I will argue later, the re-wind facility was crucial to Walkerdine's analysis. The impact of the VCR on the micro-politics of family viewing has been discussed (Morley, 1992; Gray, 1992; Ellis, 1982). Walkerdine's study is critical of positivist and some feminist approaches which tend to focus on rational interpretations of texts and do not question some of the taken for granted assumptions, for example, the link between violence and working-class masculinity. Her study adds to social analysis by examining psychic processes that had not previously been explored.

Wood (1993) examines the idea of 'repeated pleasures' and the use of video. Film theorists have argued that one of the reasons the spectator returns to the cinema was to repeat the pleasurable cinematic experience (Bellour, 1974, 1988; Mulvey, 1988). Generally, returning to a text or repeated viewings have been understood in relation to pleasures and possible fascination of the text (Mulvey, 1988; Stacey, 1987). This research will show that this is not always the case. More recently, Bainbridge and Yates (2007) have examined the use of video / DVD and repeated viewings, showing that pleasure and trauma are often closely related and, at times, viewers experience 'un-pleasure'. I will argue below, and in later chapters, that a psychoanalytic perspective on repetition is essential. There have been few studies that focus on the idea of repeat viewings of the same text that are not 'fan' literature. As well as impacting on space and the self, technological developments such as time-shift technology have also had a particular impact on 'time' and the self. Everyday time is often structured around viewing (see Chapter Five) but everyday time is also accompanied by a sense of historical and biographical time (though this may not be consciously noted). Apparatus film theory, wedded as it was to the cinema, was unable to provide any account outside of the search for cinematic visual pleasure, or the ontological, existential comforts of cinema, to account for the development of relationships *over time*. Replay technology enables a re-kindling of a relationship with a text not viewed for many years. Some texts may have only been seen as a child, or viewed with a first partner, or after the loss of a loved one, and only ever viewed in a cinema. This relationship, once rekindled, enables a movement between past and present, where 'memory', both conscious and unconscious, comes into play as the viewer moves between past and present. Video/ DVD also allows an intense relationship to develop quickly, with both recently acquired and/ or viewed television and film material as well as with past

favourites or 'repeats'⁷. It is equally important to remember that more recent relationships with programmes and films are as equally significant as those from the past.

Stacey (1994) has argued it is not possible to capture the experience of the original moment of viewing. All that can be obtained are 'retrospective representations' and interpretation of the moment and initial responses. However, the original moment may not be the *most* significant, as this research shows that texts can be revisited and take on new meanings. Seemingly benign texts can acquire emotional force in subsequent viewing. It is useful, therefore, to attempt to understand retrospective representations psychoanalytically, as psychoanalysis supplies concepts such as 'afterwardsness' concerned with the revisiting of experience (Laplanche, 1999) and repetition compulsion, which explains why certain behaviours and activities are repeatedly engaged in. One of my aims in this research was to assess the relevance of psychoanalytic concepts that have not previously been used in audience research. Record/ replay/ time shift technology can allow us to explore the way texts are used in relation to the way the self is formed, reformed and worked on through films and television programmes. I want to argue that the arrival of this technology has added many new and complex layers to spectatorship.

The literature I have reviewed has illustrated strengths and weaknesses in psychoanalytic approaches to films. There are problems with some of the models that have been adopted and also with method. Whilst psychoanalysis seems highly appropriate for a text-based method, this fails to address individual viewers who bring their own histories and experiences to the text. However, film theory convincingly argues that unconscious processes are implicated in questions of power and ideology and they cannot be bracketed or ignored. In terms of my research questions, this suggests that a psychoanalytic approach must consider methods that can include the text but also move beyond it.

Empirical media research on the other hand which understands use and meaning in relation to social categories such as class, race, gender and culture lacks a theory of the unconscious and its effects on the meaning produced and particular viewing practices that are adopted.

The research illustrates the importance of using a method that brings text and audience together. Chapter Three explores this and shows how biography can be used to help theorise conscious and unconscious processes associated with viewing. This chapter outlined some recent developments in technology that have suggested new ways of viewing television in the home. The next chapter will develop this further by exploring the potential psychic as well as social implications of these changes. I started the chapter by thinking about texts that leave an impression or have an emotional impact on the viewer, becoming 'favourites'. Film theory and media audience research have so far only provided partial answers to why or how

⁷ The proliferation of television channels also provided opportunities for the viewing and retention of television favourites from the past. Prior to this, once a favourite show ended it was impossible to see it again unless as a repeat. Now it is possible to both record and purchase classic television shows and films as well as more recent popular series.

this process might occur. Principally, this has been the result of the neglect of the individual. Some approaches have interpreted individual responses from the text; others have relegated individual meaning in favour of using social categories to interpret experience.

The next chapter offers some theoretical perspectives that inform my research design to show how it is possible to meet the aim of bringing together psychoanalysis and social/ cultural approaches in a productive way in empirical research, on an aspect of taste in film and television viewing.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS A PSYCHO-SOCIAL APPROACH TO AUDIENCE RESEARCH

This chapter takes up ideas from the previous chapter which suggest new forms of time-shift and broadcast technology allow the individual to personalise their viewing and, in turn, this allows the viewer to develop relationships and form attachments to particular texts. I will begin by exploring some of the literature from cultural studies research that has addressed intense attachments to texts and genres. This will be followed by an account of the role of the unconscious in the formation of taste, something previously understood most notably as a 'social' process in the work of Bourdieu. This section also proposes object relations as a viable model for psycho-social research, introducing the idea of texts and viewing as 'objects'. The chapter ends by considering what repetition of viewing practices or repeated viewings of particular texts might involve psychoanalytically, in particular in relation to the idea of trauma. I begin with a body of theory that has addressed audience attachments.

2.1 Attachments to texts and genres

Soap opera and fan studies have primarily been concerned with the 'pleasures' (Harrington and Bielby, 1995) and politics of the text and their uses. This literature has explored the forms of attachment 'fans' have with their particular star, genre, programme or series (Hobson, 1982; Geregthy, 1991; Penley, 1991; Grossberg, 1992; Lewis, 1992; Harrington and Bielby, 1995; Hills, 2002). Some of my interviewees describe themselves as 'fans' to identify their relationship to certain texts and stars. This has been conceptualised as a particular form of loyalty, an attachment with an active element, which Jensen calls an 'enacted affinity' (1992:19). This implies, for instance, the collection of memorabilia, writing fan letters, or attendance at awards ceremonies or exhibitions (Harrington and Bielby, 1995).

Most 'fan' literature relates to studies of particular genres, such as science fiction, or, contains theories of stardom, or fan cultures (see Dyer 1977, 1979; Lewis, 1992; Stacey, 1994; Hills, 2002), rather than the diverse texts that have become significant to viewers which I have chosen to research. Studies of fandom deal with the 'intense' pleasures associated with being a fan (Harrington and Bielby, 1995; Geraghty, 1992; Hills, 2002). This thesis shows that the experience of returning to particular texts may be intense but it is not always *pleasurable* in the conventional way pleasure is understood.

Fan literature is important as it raises questions about emotions and emotional responses and attachment. Jensen argues that to become a fan is to acknowledge a need to 'desire', 'cherish', 'admire', 'envy' and 'celebrate', but argues:

We know far too little about the nature and possibilities of varieties of affection, attachment, sentiment and investments as they are manifested in people's lives... Does our selection of particular figures and forms connect

with other aspects of ourselves? How does sentiment work? How and why do things mean? (1992:25)

Grossberg argues when audiences read texts they are constantly struggling to make the text mean something 'that connects to their own lives, experiences, needs and desires' (1992:52). Texts, which are special to the viewer, will have a particular feeling and foreground a certain emotional sensibility, which chimes with the individual's particular circumstances. I would add this could also change and develop over time. To be a fan of a particular text would, for Grossberg, define the 'strength of investment in particular experiences, practices, and identities' (1992:57). By making a particular text matter enough to be a favourite they become a voice for the viewer, speaking about something that has significant meanings for them. Zittoun (2006) sees the symbolic use of cultural and media objects as serving a more pragmatic emotional purpose, in that objects can be used because of their familiarity to form a bridge between a situation associated with stability, such as home, in the face of change, such as leaving home. Although Zittoun's work is not psychoanalytic, her work does suggest the transitional object as outlined by Winnicott (see below and Chapter Three).

Grossberg and others point to the struggle to make texts mean something. Psychoanalysis is also concerned with meaning but broadens the focus to encompass *unconscious* meaning. All meanings, however, contain a mixture of conscious and unconscious content, as later chapters will show. This is part of what Chodorow (1999) calls 'our unconscious psychic reality'. As the work of Chodorow, and also Bollas and Layton, (discussed below) shows, the viewer will not always be aware of, or able to articulate, what it is that is significant or why the pleasure associated with the text can, at times, be uncomfortable or even a 'dis-pleasure'. But nonetheless, it is a very intense and real experience.

Chodorow (1999:13) argues that 'feelings' matter because they are highly complex, encompassing 'feeling based-stories or proto-stories - unconscious fantasies that constitute our unconscious inner life' and this along with a variety of 'emotionally laden psychodynamic processes' are part of the way personal meaning is created. Within Cultural Studies, some feminist and lesbian and gay studies of the affective element of lived experience has been acknowledged (Sennett and Cobb, 1972; Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Scott, 1992; Skeggs, 1995,1997; Walkerdine, Melody and Lucey, 2001). Harding and Pribram (2002) and Williams and Bendelow (1998) point out that conceptual work on emotions has been much neglected. Emotions are often viewed, as slippery uncontrollable variables not open to interpretation on the one hand, or as 'performed' or discursive constructions on the other. This contrasts to the daily displays of emotion seen on reality television and talk shows. Oprah Winfrey is cited as being significant in promoting discourses around emotional literacy on her show which have wider currency in contemporary culture (Lunt and Stenner, 2005; Illouz, 2003). Emerging from within psychotherapy in the USA, 'Film Therapy' or 'Cinematherapy' (Berg-Cross 1990) has found its way onto the popular 'self-help' bookshelves. For example, Peske and West's (2002) *'Advanced Cinematherapy: The Girl's Guide To Finding Happiness One Movie At A Time'* finds a

film to solve every 'Bridget Jones' man problem and dilemma. Like therapeutic film therapy⁸ which this kind of project derives from, there is an idea connecting films with 'catharsis' and this pivots on the idea of the purging of extreme emotions (O'Shaughnessy, 1999; Chaudri, 2001; Gibbons, 1999; Hamilton, 2001). I have found evidence in my data of viewers choosing a particular text because they want to cry or feel an intense emotional reaction (see Chapter Five) and sometimes the viewer is not clear why they seek to do this or what it achieves (see Chapters Four – Six).

Emotions cannot always be controlled. Characteristically emotion features an element of surprise. Where texts are concerned there is often a reaction that was not expected or prepared for, which then transforms the text into one that viewers become attached to. With these kinds of significant texts there is a compelling element and viewers are drawn to them not only for repeated viewings but also in memory, as my interviews will show. Mary (see Chapter Four) was sitting at home one day watching what she classed as a 'harmless', 'bland' film *Father of The Bride*⁹. Suddenly there was a moment in the narrative where the bride was leaving the wedding and her father wanted to say goodbye to her before she left. Here, the humour was created around his failed attempts to achieve this. Mary was suddenly full of emotion; her eyes filled with tears and she found herself "sobbing".

Mulvey (1988) describes moments when the film narrative temporarily halts for the viewer to experience visual pleasure. I want to argue that a similar 'halting' process occurs, but one dictated by the emotional needs of the viewer. Mary went on to explain how she temporarily left the text and was transported back to her own wedding day and her attempts to actively avoid a farewell with her father with whom she had an intense relationship. Then, in the next moment she was forced to confront her feelings about the forthcoming wedding of her only son and how she would say goodbye to him. The moment encapsulated both past and present hurts, anxieties and feelings.

Kuhn (1995) writes of her similar response to a film from her childhood *Mandy*¹⁰, where she found herself sobbing during a discussion of the film with a friend. Kuhn recognised this response came from the past but noted that it was 'troubling and impossible to ignore' [my emphasis]. This kind of response cannot be understood purely by discursive or performative approaches. Kuhn argues that emotions and memory force experience onto the agenda and can help bridge the gap between text and audience response. Emotions cannot be used uncritically as some kind of a guarantee or evidence of authenticity, but at the same time emotional responses

⁸ This is usually done in a therapeutic situation through the selection and viewing of pertinent films (Hesley and Hesley, 2000 'Let's Rent Two Films and Talk in the Morning'). For instance for someone with an alcohol problem or with a member of their family with drink issues, a film such as 'Leaving Las Vegas', whose subject matter concerns an alcoholic's journey of self-destruction, may be chosen by the therapist. I would suggest it might be more productive to start with a film or text that the client has identified as significant.

⁹ 1991 Dir Charles Shyler TouchstoneUSA.

¹⁰ 1952 Dir Alexander MacKendrick UK

cannot simply be discounted. Kuhn wants to know what these emotions and feelings *mean* (1995:33) and this research addresses this question directly.

2.2 The unconscious, the psycho-social and taste

Above I noted that fan theorists such as Grossberg (1992) have grappled with the idea of attachment to texts and also meaning. I suggested that it was necessary to understand both conscious and unconscious meaning. This section introduces psychoanalytic perspectives which will be developed throughout this thesis that offer effective ways of approaching the relationship between text and viewer, processes of viewing, and understanding emotional responses to texts.

The idea of an autonomous rational subject has long been disputed (Henriques et al, 1984; Walkerdine and Blackman, 2001). Human beings appear to behave and think rationally, but the idea of a dynamic unconscious holds that 'reality' is never experienced fully objectively. Unconscious processes mediate our thoughts and influence our actions. Subjects are 'defended' in that the unconscious works to manage and ward off unconscious anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). They can do this through the adoption of defence mechanisms such as splitting, projection, projective identification and introjection. These are innate human capacities and are present in all our social interactions. Transference and countertransference, described simply as the passing of emotions and feeling between people, is for Chodorow the 'demonstration that our inner world of psychic reality helps to shape, and give meaning to the intersubjective, social, and cultural worlds we inhabit (1999:13).

We live both consciously and unconsciously. I noted the limitations associated with the division between 'psychic' film theory and 'social' media audience research. Hollway draws attention to the hyphen used when discussing the psycho-social. The hyphen connects the psychic to the social whilst keeping the parts distinct (2003:7) but equal. Our unique biographies are shaped by life experiences that happen in the social and cultural world. As my case studies show, desire and unconscious phantasy mediate experience throughout life. Events in childhood such as the birth of a sibling or divorce galvanise subjects unconsciously to find ways of understanding and coping with the experience. Patterns of fantasy can be traced across a range of objects and media texts.

Chodorow (1999) views transference to be the primary mechanism for personalising the world through our inner experiences, feelings and phantasies. Traditionally, transference was thought to only be present in the relationship between analyst and client, where the client projects thoughts, desires and feelings which belong to significant figures from their past, prototypically parents, onto the therapist (Grant & Crawley 2002). There is now widespread agreement that transference is a ubiquitous everyday phenomenon (Andersen and Berk 1998; Chodorow 1999, Schore, 2003)¹¹. Through transference, the past gives meaning to the present as it

¹¹ Within British psycho-social studies there is debate about the concept of transference and its relationship to the clinical setting and outside as used by researchers. See 'Special Issue: British Psycho (-) Social Studies' in *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* Vol 13 Number 4 December 2008.

shapes the way we experience current reality and, in turn, present feelings and phantasies, which shape our particular social and cultural experience.

I agree with Chodorow's argument that it is productive to theoretically 'synthesise' and adopt a 'both and' rather than an 'either-or' approach to theoretical tensions and contradictions (Chodorow 1999:3). For instance Post-Kleinian object relations have productively informed the research questions but a variety of psychoanalytic perspectives have been adopted in response to the data. To adopt a Kleinian position may be productive for exploring a particular problem but this need not preclude the use of a Freudian or Lacanian approach if appropriate (see Chapter Three). This flexibility is essential if psycho-social research is to be productive and resist the rather constraining and divisive 'either / or' dichotomy Frosh and Baraitser (2008) posit between Kleinian and Lacanian approaches. Like Chodorow (1999) I adopt an approach that rejects form of cultural, sociological and psychoanalytic forms of determinism, seeking to find an approach that provides the greatest depth and level of illumination in regard to my interviewees.

I have found a range of approaches to be useful for this research. However object relations are helpful because, without abandoning the significance of the child's passage through key moments such as the Oedipus complex and the entry into language, object relations shifts the focus to *relationships* and the need for relationships at the core of human experience (Gomez 1997). Object relations theories offer the possibility of conceiving of a social being who lives psychically and relationally. Winnicott (1992:99) famously stated there is 'no such thing as a baby', meaning whenever we encounter a surviving infant, we will also find a caring adult (usually a mother) without whom the child will not survive. The self develops, and then exists within the context of relationships, which have been theorised in terms of 'objects' and this is explored below.

Recent years have witnessed the development of the proposition that the self is constructed narratively (Roberts 2002; Polkinghorne 1998; McLeod 1997; Freeman 1993). Thompson writes the self is a 'symbolic project' which individuals complete by weaving a narrative that selects from the plethora of symbolic mediated materials available (1995:210). As I will show in the next section, this is rather one-sided. As noted previously new technology facilitated the development of intense relationships with texts and particular viewing practices. Freudian theories were based on drives and the term object traditionally denoted an object (a person or thing), which was a target selected for the satisfaction of desire or pleasure deriving from an instinctual impulse (Freud 1916-17 / 1982, 1920/1984,). In Kleinian theory, relationships with objects tend to be primarily between people, or parts of people, (such as body parts which have particular functions e.g. the breast for feeding), existing both externally, or internally, as a representation (Gomez 1997). These are known as 'internal' and 'external' objects and we have relationships with these objects. This will be examined further in 2.4 and Chapter Three.

Section 1.2 explained that theories of fantasy have been used by feminist film theorists to explain how films stage desire and provide multiple points of entry for

identification in films. 'Original fantasies' provide the basic structure for all fantasies according to Laplanche and Pontalis (in Burgin 1986) and these fantasies deal with core enigmas that confront the individual: the primal scene, seduction and Oedipal fantasies. I found evidence in my data of primal fantasy scenarios, which account for strong emotional reactions to films, as seen in account of Mary's viewing of *The Birds* as a child (Chapter Four). This provides a particularly rich example of identification, which involved lived experience, which meets something seen on the screen, and is then worked on in fantasy and made meaningful.

The presence of original fantasies however is not all-pervasive and whilst there is certainly a fantasy element to the film experience, this is not unique to film. Susan Isaacs fruitfully summarises the ideas of Melanie Klein and her contemporary followers arguing the position that 'all mental activity takes place on the basis of phantasised relations with objects' (Isaacs in Klein et al 1952). Phantasy is an unconscious, ubiquitous and on-going phenomenon present in all our interactions. Therefore, it is possible to argue that all viewing is always/ already in phantasy. All our experiences and encounters however real they seem, are apprehended through the lens of phantasy. Klein points to complex forms of anxiety, defences and identifications (Hinshelwood 1989) which are phantasy charged and which collide as the internal and external worlds encounter one another, in the case of viewing, in the space that is formed when the 'world of the text' and 'world of the reader' meet (Ricoeur 1988).

Splitting is one response to this as we try to separate benevolent from malevolent forces which are construed in phantasy. Processes of projection and introjection are also responses and expressions of unconscious phantasy, and this colours our experiences. In phantasy we evacuate parts of ourselves into other objects that may feel difficult, so that difficulty comes to reside in others and we take in aspects of others, which then come to constitute parts of our inner world (Redman and Whitehouse-Hart and 2008). Phantasy for the most part operates outside of language (although it may be expressed in particular verbal responses) often as a feeling or something sensed but which cannot be fully articulated. Chapter Three explains in depth how I have adopted a method that is designed to facilitate analysis of unconscious processes and forms of communication to take such processes into account.

I explained in the introduction that debate is ongoing about how to constitute the psycho-social. Traditional drive based psychoanalysis, with its focus on universal laws and prohibitions associated with Freud (1915/2005) has been criticised for its a-historical, universalising tendencies (Segal 2001). The unconscious is a site formed by prohibitions on desire, (Freud 1951/2005, Mitchell 2002) it is a place comprised of 'repressed contents, which have been denied access to the preconscious and conscious' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973:474). Ultimately, the Oedipus complex and the law of the father govern prohibition and repression (Freud 1913/ 1985) so particular forms of kinship structures, such as heterosexual nuclear families, are taken as the model from which to understand all psychic effects.

Debate exists about the nature of the unconscious and the importance given to the concept of repression and 'universal' sources of internal conflict (see Segal, 2001, Mitchell 2002, Layton 2004). Theorists such as Chodorow, Benjamin, Segal and Layton acknowledge conflict results from universal processes such as the Oedipus complex and repression, but also stress the importance of historical contingency (Chodorow 1999, Layton, 2004). Certain social arrangements, such as heterosexual nuclear families, patriarchal and hierarchical class based societies, establish particular forms of prohibition. So whilst 'all in a given culture may have to contend with some of the same norms and prohibitions', for instance, the Oedipus complex on desire - there is 'no way to predict how a given individual will make meaning from the obstacles he/she faces' (Layton 2004:42). As later data chapters illustrate this is why it is vital to pay attention to the way biographical experiences and events are made meaningful psychically and in turn their impact on lived reality.

Here, I want to draw attention more specifically to texts and viewing. If viewing is to be understood through the lens of phantasy what can be learnt about the way this is experienced in relation to viewing? My data show for example the way in which Sue and Mary, growing up as working-class girls, were forced to confront the enigma of origins, through the arrival of siblings after both being an only child for many years. In both cases this significant moment impacted on their identifications with parents and the emotional difficulties involved are explored in ongoing engagements with particular texts and viewing practices (see Chapter Four).

Object relations theories do not discount theories of repression but pay more attention to the nature of the human as object seeking and also to the effect of 'environment'. Winnicott (1990, 1971) stresses the importance of the maternal environment, focussing on the interactions, handling and emotional communication between mother and infant. As humans, our survival and development, which has both physical and emotional components, depends not entirely on the management and fulfilment of drives, but on our relationships with others. Adam Phillips (2002:54) summarises this by saying we start with the mother then later the world, which we 'unwittingly use to bring parts of ourselves to life'. I will describe in later chapters some of the ways texts are used to address parts of the self. This suggests that object relations may be able to offer answers to some of the important questions Grossberg (1992) raised concerning the struggle to connect texts to audiences' lives and experiences.

Object relations therefore posit a human subject who seeks relationships with objects. The following section will explore film and television texts as 'objects'. At this point I want to introduce some perspectives, which inform my understanding of creative processes and 'taste' as it relates to object selection. These perspectives link to the following sections, which explore film and television texts as objects and the relationship between texts, repetition and trauma. I have selectively used a combination of these perspectives to inform my interpretation of data in later chapters. They are useful because they help to explain the significance of objects to psychic life as well as providing a space in which to think through the effects of social reality and the ways individuals use objects in response to lived experience.

The degree to which individuals are relationship seeking has been debated within contemporary psychoanalytic schools of thought. Layton argues that individuals seek 'mutuality' in attachments but there is also a 'part of the subject that consciously and unconsciously resists being bent to the will of the other' (Layton 1994:10). For Winnicott (1965/1990, 1971) and Bollas (1992) this can be translated as the need for humans to feel loved, valued and *separate* from their primary carer figures as well as being in touch with their own uniqueness. For Winnicott 'good enough' parenting ensures a child can cope with being alone, realising it can survive, and has a sense of being separate from the mother and is able to play and be creative, using objects it encounters in this process. It is important that primary carers can tolerate the child's needs as something separate and not try to impose their own desires and needs onto the child. Neuroses occur when this process is interfered with, for instance when the infant is threatened with rejection or loss of love if their behaviour is not compliant with the will of the other.

Winnicott's 'true self' (1960/1990:141) relates to personal psychic reality of the kind described by Chodorow above, characterised by unconscious meaning making processes, desires and 'inherited potential'. It should manifest as a sense of 'aliveness', expressions in spontaneity and a sense of contentment, where the individual is happy to be alone with him/ herself. Bollas (1992) and Layton (2004) associate this with self-experience and what presents as 'character'; our 'tastes' (in films and television for example) are the terrain on which character and object choice operate.

2.2 Class and taste

In this research I have focussed on a group of working-class people and I have chosen a sample containing young, middle-aged and older people to compare the experience of social change and media use in the light of social and historical change. Historical and social processes have an effect on subjectivity, but the perspectives outlined above suggest that processes that threaten the spontaneous self are between people, particularly significant figures from childhood such as parents. These relationships, and how they are experienced, cannot be detached from the social and social organisation can also be experienced emotionally. Sennett and Cobb (1972) notably described 'the hidden injuries of class'. They charted a range of emotional responses, such as shame, that are lived with and become part of the experience of being working class. Economic difficulties that are the result of a class based capitalist society are lived as personal 'failures'.

Layton (2002a, 2002b) is an important contemporary theorist working psycho-socially who addresses the relationship between ideology and subjectivity in hierarchical societies. Her theory of the 'normative unconscious' builds on Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation and Lacanian ideas involving the categorisation and assignment of symbolic value in culture (Lacan 1977). Certain categories are more valid than others e.g. male / female, active/ passive, white/ black, heterosexual/ homosexual (Layton 2002b).

Socialisation involves learning ways of being which are lived in everyday disposition or habitus (Bourdieu 1984), as I will explore below. We learn certain ways of being a man or woman early in life, for instance, and ways of being must not conflict with historically specific social norms. A good example would be the demand by parents to be a 'good boy' or 'good girl' and this usually entails already established behaviours and attitudes. Layton argues that it is usually the fear of loss of love that makes individuals compliant, suggesting also relationships with key figures such as parents must be considered. Also, 'prohibitions that come from contingent' historically specific norms involving discourse, for example those found in the media concerning masculinity and femininity which are then interpreted by families in unique ways, are 'as likely to result in unconscious conflicts as those that come from universal law' (2004: 48) such as the Oedipus complex.

Commenting on contemporary modernity marked by risk and the individual's responses to risk, Beck proposes an ego-centred society. Beck (1992) acknowledges that in 'new' modern societies individuals are engaged in self-reflexivity, against a background of economic insecurity and this may be anxiety provoking, but he does not explore lived experience in depth. Elliot and Lemert (2006), in a case study based work, attempt to illustrate how these changes are lived by individuals, from aggressive consumption to those engaged in undergoing plastic surgery in a bid to re-make a bigger, better 'self'.

At the same time, the changes Beck points to deprive individuals of the chance of a secure 'narrative' future. Everyday life is marked by risk. The idea of a job for life, so important in the past for a sense of identity, is no longer possible and it becomes more and more difficult for individuals to plan a future. Even marriage, which was thought of as a partnership for life, is now not expected to last, possibly ending in one or two repeated divorces (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Elliott and Lemert, 2006). Therefore nothing in personal and public life is secure in the way it was previously.

As I will show in later chapters, objects and activities like viewing can provide a sense of stability in response to change as Zittoun (2006) argues. Equally, texts can work over points of instability, conflict and insecurity. An important argument in this research concerns the relationship between media texts and viewing practices and the ways they are connected and used in response to the individual's lived experience, lived experience being conceived of as a dynamic relationship between individual biography, psychic processes and outer social reality. These perspectives link to section 2.5 on trauma. My data show that lived experience of class and gender involves emotional struggles and, in some cases, actual trauma associated with this experience. In turn, this is articulated and experienced through feelings and emotional responses to texts and in the adoption of certain viewing practices.

Bollas argues that the individual's unique biography is lived in part in the everyday as character (Bollas 1992) and for the most part it would not be unusual to relate this to the notion of taste. Bollas is concerned with everyday object *selection* and *use* as

an expression of personal 'idiom', which can be thought of as practical, everyday expressions of unconscious processes concerned with individual uniqueness (see 2.4). Although not explicitly referring to this as taste, this is implicit in much Bollas proposes. Likewise Bollas does not produce an account that acknowledges historical specificity, and his work does not focus specifically on the relationship between technological change and society. As the case studies will show, there is correspondence between external reality and the way this has been worked on psychically that is significant in understanding relationships with significant texts and as expressions of taste.

Any discussion of taste then must consider the influential work of Bourdieu who unlike Bollas, regards taste as a concept, which can only be understood socially. For Bourdieu, culture is a social agent that has effects. In particular, it is involved in the demarcation of social class groups. His work was based on large-scale empirical work very different from the in-depth case study approach this research takes. From this he developed two highly influential concepts that are relevant to this research: Cultural Capital and Habitus. (Bourdieu, 1984). He highlights the division between 'legitimate' or 'high' culture and popular or 'low' culture. Engagement with the different forms of culture associated with legitimate and popular culture corresponds to social class distinctions. Put simply, through socialisation processes, including the family and the education system, those individuals who are trained to understand, appropriate and incorporate legitimate forms of culture into the dispositions and routines of everyday life are likely to be bourgeois. In contrast popular culture is associated with the working class.

The possession of and ability to 'use' legitimate culture translates into actual social advantage, rather like money. Culture is a form of capital which can be spent and ensures advantage and privilege in the fields of education and employment, for example. Popular Culture is less valuable in terms of cultural capital; in fact, to be marked out culturally as working class in some environments has a negative value. This cultural reality is not acknowledged by Bollas whose work rarely makes reference to difficulties such as economic realities that might impinge on object choice. The working class who consume popular culture are often socially excluded from certain environments and are unable to take advantage of the benefits that accompany legitimate culture. I will return to these ideas in later chapters with illustrative examples.

The habitus is closely associated with disposition (conventionally similar to character), routines, habits and ways of being in different situations. The way the individual habituates him/herself to routines and practices is, for Bourdieu (1984, 1977), an intergenerational form of learning (discussed in Chapter Four) passed on through socialisation processes in particular families and formal education until it becomes, as Bourdieu himself, notes unconscious. In fact, for Bourdieu the habitus for each individual is never anything more than a 'forgetting of history' that is present, but not consciously recognised in everyday action and disposition. The habitus contains:

.....yesterday's man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result. Yet we do not sense this man of the past, because he is inveterate in us; he makes up the *unconscious* [my emphasis] part of ourselves. (1977:79)

For Bourdieu, habitus and disposition are associated with forms of objectivity as agents learn to recognise other group members¹² and there is a 'consensus of meaning and practices in the world' (1977:80). In essence, however, in the quote above Bourdieu acknowledges the unconscious without explicitly theorising this psychoanalytically. He also argues the habitus is a form of socialisation, an 'immanent law' which is laid down for each individual in 'earliest infancy' (1977:81). There is also patterning in each individual case, as habitus can be thought of as performed or enacted with an individual and personal touch. Similarities with Bolas can again be seen, as it is this personal touch or idiom that he is interested exploring as a psychic phenomenon. Bourdieu would no doubt respond to the case study approach as individual examples of wider patterns of distinction. I am alluding here to the overlaps between some of Bourdieu's key assumptions and those of psychoanalysis, such as the importance of infancy, families and the unconscious and this will be returned to in later chapters.

Bennett et al have recently completed a review of Bourdieu's work with a large-scale survey of the organisation of cultural practices of the British public (2009). This impressive comprehensive study found 'beyond question the existence of systematic patterns of cultural taste and practice' that correspond to social class divisions as well as demarcation along race and gender lines. So patterns of demarcation exist along cultural fields within each field from sport to music members of different social classes appropriate the field differently. *Distinction* is interesting because it does not provide detailed case studies but uses vignettes to illustrate the types of behaviours and practices he views as symptomatic of the different classes' use of culture. For example a pertinent example for this research might be educated middle-class people who enjoy film criticism, bringing their intellectual powers to bear on the reading of the film.

Bourdieu, in his original study, did not pay sufficient attention to broadcasting and television viewing. Television is interesting as it is often thought to be a democratic medium, and Bennett et al found that film and television viewing in particular had weaker patterns of demarcation than other fields such as music and art. They found that watching television and cinema-going are two of the most widely shared cultural practices throughout British society. In relation to class demarcation and cinema and television, the central findings concur with some of the trends observed in those in my case studies where general tastes and activities were concerned;

¹² I would argue that psychoanalysis adds to this by showing how processes of recognition can also be viewed as examples of normative unconscious defensive process (Layton 2004, 2003, 2002b) where individuals fear rejection from significant figures in families if they step outside established behaviours. There are also questions that can be asked about the search for recognition and the idea of permanent, stable, identificatory images to compensate for lack found in Lacan.

briefly summarised, affluent groups attend the cinema more frequently as they have more disposable income. There is a marked difference between higher income and professional groups and the working class with the former preferring 'art' and 'independent' cinemas, the latter multiplex and popular cinemas. Bennett found that those in the lowest socio-economic groups are unable to afford to visit the cinema. Working-class people without a university education watch more television than those who are graduates, professionals and executives. Within those who watch television, channel and programme preference is relevant with regard to class. Professionals and executives have a pedagogic relationship to television and view terrestrial and digital channels associated with 'high' culture, arts, and programmes of an educational and informative nature, such as BBC2 and BBC4. Viewers from lower socio-economic groups prefer traditional entertainment and popular channels such as ITV and BBC1. There were also significant divisions found along class, gender and age lines in relation to genre (Bennett et al 2009). They note overall that television is used actively to mark out individual lifestyles, which supports its role in the self-reflexive projects which Beck sees as symptomatic of contemporary society. It was also impossible for Bourdieu to take account of the technological developments in electronic media that Bennett et al's study encountered. Electronic media and digital broadcasting technologies by their very nature predispose individualised viewing for example.

I have noted that I consider Bolas to implicitly refer to taste in the same way I have indicated that Bourdieu's theory of taste and the habitus, though unacknowledged by him, are replete with what are unconscious, emotional and psychic features. I want to propose some ideas for thinking of 'taste' psycho-socially which are explored further in data analysis chapters.

At the start of the interviews most respondents made attempts to display some knowledge of what counts as 'good' and 'bad' taste in programmes and films. They 'know' something is 'trash' but may still quite like it. This occurs when I ask them about their general tastes in film and television. In Chris's case this is particularly acute (see Chapter Six). He grew up working class but now operates professionally in an academic environment as a subject librarian. The idea of 'difficult' and 'easy' films features throughout and is associated with difficult emotions that move beyond the bounds of the text. Rather than being a pleasurable experience, watching films provokes anxiety in Chris.

I have noted that Bourdieu explicitly discussed the unconscious in relation to intergenerational transmissions of disposition in relation to culture. He notes the unconscious as having some relation to the past, history and childhood but he does not understand this psychoanalytically. The traces of the past for Bourdieu are unconscious in that the individual is not aware they are having an effect on the present, but he presents this in a rather benign way and this is something a psychoanalytic approach would take much more seriously. I want to suggest that it is possible to understand Bourdieu psycho-socially by focussing, as the case studies in this research do, on the experience of habitus, disposition and distinction.

Layton explores the psychoanalytic components of Bourdieu's work, in particular the relationship between emotions and power in her study of shopping (2003). She concentrated on a small sample of middle- and upper-class people and found strong emotional reactions of shame, humiliation, anxiety and fear associated with shopping and certain downmarket discount stores in the USA. She found that it was not just the poor quality and cheap goods that offended her respondents; it was also revulsion in response to the *people* who shopped there out of necessity. The same response had different emotional underpinnings for bourgeois and petit-bourgeois respondents. For the middle-class shoppers who had been born working class there was a fear of having to return to the experience and for upper-class respondents there was a superiority of never having experienced need. Bourdieu (1979) notes that the bourgeoisie experience of culture is one of luxury and the working-class one of need, where choice is determined by necessity.

If we accept this, it is possible to explore the unconscious dimensions of Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu claims that the markers, which distinguish class 'owe their efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness' and 'beyond the scrutiny or control by the will' (Bourdieu in Layton 2003: 37). Therefore class relations 'manifest in taste' and also in phantasies about how these appear to other people. It is those feelings of shame, anxiety, revulsion and superiority, however, which 'differentiate one class from another' (Layton 2003:37). Middle-class intellectuals enjoying art house cinema feel disgust at the pleasures of viewers of popular television or the likes of 'the Coles' watching *Rocky II* in Walkerdine's *Video Replay*.

For Bourdieu, recognition by members of the same group is important, but for Beck being a group member is now superseded by the move towards being recognised as an individual. It is self-reflexivity and 'creative biography', which, marks out the successful from the unsuccessful individual. But what kind of an experience is this? My case studies show that processes of demarcation and taste and those involving defining oneself as a successful individual overlap, but both are anxiety-provoking and stressful for those concerned. Bourdieu's work offers detailed descriptions of cultural scenarios and the operations of individuals in these scenarios but his (necessarily) descriptive study does not explore the *experience* of 'distinction'. Despite the fact that Bolas ignores the social somewhat, I aim to show in this research that it is possible to use his work, along with a range of psychoanalytically informed perspectives to understand both Bourdieu and Beck's work psycho-socially.

My sample provides a snapshot of working class people who have lived through the social changes associated with late modernity and globalisation and the particular forms they took in Britain, such as Thatcherism. The interviewees have witnessed the changes in technology I have described. Some have experienced social mobility moving from one class into another. Through social mobility they may not all now be considered working class and they all live fairly affluent lives. This research was not designed as a comparative study, exploring what might be seen as characteristically middle-class responses as opposed to those that are working-

class. The research concentrates on the lived experience of class and gender assessing emotional costs and the way gendered and classed lived experience influences particular forms of attachments with texts. The next section explains that theories of 'objects' are valuable tools for probing the research problems.

2.4 Texts and viewing as objects

Gomez (1997) writes that as well as relationships with other human 'objects', that individuals have 'secondary' relationships with objects that are non-human or 'things'. For Winnicott (1971), Bollas, (1988, 1992) and Phillips, (2002) et al 'things' are subjectively important. Silverstone's (1994) discussion of television as 'object' is based on Winnicott's ideas and Silverstone suggests reasons why the relationship with the 'box in the corner' might be subjectively important. Winnicott's work, as previously mentioned, was concerned with the emotional development of children. In particular, he was interested in the stage of development in early childhood where the child has to learn to separate from its primary caregiver (usually mothers) to become a confident, emotionally secure individual. This takes place in what Winnicott (1971) called the 'transitional space', where objects play a vitally important reality 'testing' function. This space is a place where borders can be explored between inner and outer worlds, self and other, subject and object. The earliest experiences of fusion with the mother, from the child thinking it is omnipotent, through varying degrees of separation, to relative independence, which continues throughout childhood, are explored in this transitional space (Winnicott 1971). It is a space of reality testing and the importance of this argument for method is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

The mother necessarily recognises that the child must separate from her and she also acknowledges this process is highly stressful for the child, who experiences anxiety and fear. The mother's role is to gently frustrate the child, for instance by introducing periods of separation to facilitate this move to independence (Winnicott 1971). Non-material objects can take the place of the mother typically blankets, teddy bears, or songs on a music box for example, whose status the mother colludes with; for example by speaking to the bear as if it were real. Such objects are utilised symbolically, to help manage the anxiety associated with independence and periods of separation. It can be the case that for the child, having the blanket to help them go off to sleep, becomes more important than the actual mother being there. This is because the child endows the object with symbolic significance and it comes to stand for the security of the fusion between mother and child. (Winnicott 1971).

These 'objects' serve other important functions. In fantasy the child can also explore issues around its own omnipotence, power and vulnerability. The child can use the object, symbolically its mother, to test out such powers. The child can throw the object away, hit it, project hurtful impulses and wishes at the object, and like real mothers, it survives. The silk at the end of the blanket always feels the same, it retains its qualities and, like the dependable mother, 'returns'. This helps to build the child's confidence. At the same time, however, there is the realisation that

individuals are always vulnerable, to the extent that their survival is ultimately linked to other social beings.

The activities associated with transitional phenomena form the basis for play and creativity and later moves by the child into wider culture. Silverstone (1994) stresses the importance of communication for individuals who are both 'product' and 'producer' of symbolic acts of communication. He is interested in the relationship between the media and the need for, what Giddens terms, 'ontological security' (1994). Silverstone's (1994) argument pivots on the idea of television as a 'box in the corner' of the living room and builds on the constancy and 'flow' of television described by Raymond Williams, (1974). He then develops this using Winnicott's (1971) ideas on the 'transitional object' to argue that the media and television facilitate ontological security for many people.

Silverstone (1994) claims television comes as a pre-packaged, complex communication of sound and image, which together make powerful claims on reality and emotion. He argues that television can operate as a transitional object is a transitional object and lists the following 'transitional' characteristics:

- Television is always there, constantly available.
- With children it can be used as a babysitter and adults may also carry memories of it being used in this way in their lives.
- The continuity of sound, voices, music and flickering images is soothing.
- It provides continuity through the constant flow of programming. There is a reassurance obtained through the predictability of the weather, news, or soap operas. 'Threats' associated with the 'real' world as well as emotional anxiety will be addressed and also managed on behalf of the viewers. Television is an object of trust where reality testing can take place in the safety of the home (see also Scannell, 2007)
- Television, like the teddy bears and blankets can survive viewers switching off in anger, shouting abuse at the set, even hurling objects at the set and when switched on again it remains the same. (Silverstone, 1994)

This is clearly a strong argument for the transitional function of television but Silverstone's work is unable to offer any ways of thinking about specific programmes and films that come to be meaningful for people. Using Silverstone's approach it would be difficult to argue beyond a film or programme being nothing more than a wish to return to the comfort of early fusion with the mother, which is very similar to the regression to dream like states of 1970s film theory.¹³ There may also be some argument for texts as places for reality or 'experience' testing, which this research will explore. Silverstone's work is useful, but too general, as it neglects transitional characteristics and functions of individual texts. The research takes up this challenge and investigates through empirical research.

¹³ Silverstone does acknowledge this and is keen to argue this need not be pathological and a negatively 'regressive' experience.

This task requires a method that is able to explore the intensity of the emotional relationship with texts. Fan researchers such as Hills (2002) and Harrington and Beilby (1995) also use Winnicott's ideas about transitional space but both remain centrally focussed on explaining and understanding the concept of pleasure. I agree that pleasure is significant but within cultural studies audience resistance and celebratory approaches to pleasure have, for a variety of political reasons dominated. Significantly, Walkerdine (1997: 15) argues that cultural studies' assumptions of an 'active and resisting audience' are imbued with fantasies and projections on to the working classes. This particular strand seeing their consumption and use of popular culture as 'all good' in opposition to those views often found in effects research that view the use of popular culture negatively. Often within Cultural Studies there is suspicion and resistance to any data interpretation which questions the investments audiences have in popular culture. It is not popular to propose anything that suggests audiences are not active and creative (Walkerdine, 1997:15) and this research shows the limitations of such views. As the data analysis chapters show or there may be times when audiences 'actively' engage in practices that provoke anxiety.

I stated above that one of my aims has been to rethink attachments. In cultural studies 'fan' research this term has not been extensively used. Emotional 'investments' are often theorised as the repeated pleasurable consumption of popular culture (Fiske 1992, 189a). As Redman (2008:5) notes whilst 'social connectedness' has been a central concern for Sociologists, this has not been theorised in terms of 'attachment'. The concept of attachment has been associated with psychology and the theories of John Bowlby (1969) who argued that infants are inherently predisposed to forge strong bonds with primary carers. There are a number of implications arising from this for the social world mainly around the significance of social conditions and their relationship with individual development in later life. My focus here, concerns relationships, but with texts. My approach follows that used by Redman and I (Redman & Whitehouse-Hart 2008) focusing on 'the means by which people and objects are brought to life and become personally meaningful' (Redman 2008:6). As the research will show relationships with early carers can influence attachments to particular texts. Further to this I will argue in later chapters, it is useful to understand viewing processes, not only, as transitional, as Silverstone (1994) argued, but also through other psychoanalytic concepts such as repetition compulsion and as responses to trauma.

Christopher Bollas also draws on Winnicott to develop his sophisticated analysis of character and the role of 'things' in allowing character to be articulated (1987, 1992, 1999). His work attempts to offer ways of understanding 'self experience' and argues that people invest objects and practices such as viewing or listening to music with unconscious meaning. When the object or practice is put to use individual's psychic history is evoked (Bollas 1992). For Bollas, psychoanalysis is a 'theory of memory's desire, of experiences that having yielded a certain value become the basis of subsequent related interests' (Bollas 2000). The idea of repeated viewings discussed in some film theory has been associated with infantile sexuality and the Freudian idea of the 'pleasure principle' (Penley 1988, Lapsley and Westlake 1988)

the drive to seek pleasure and avoid pain, which the cinematic experience offers in abundance as pleasure is repeated with each viewing (Lapsley & Westlake 1988). For Bollas object use sets in motion complex processes that the individual can use to develop psychic structures to enhance self-experience which may cohere around pleasure but do not always avoid pain.

He refers to experiences that resonate with something psychically and the reasons for this cannot be fully known, as they may be unconscious (Bollas 1992, 2000). For some reason at certain moments we experience embodied reflection or heightened self-awareness. This can lead us in the direction of particular objects and / or experiences. For Bollas, psychic life and survival revolves around the desire to know, explore and re-visit pivotal moments that may or may not be located in childhood, with the aim of having some form of self-transformation, however minute. These moments may be universal experiences such as the Oedipus complex or they may relate to a trauma such as abandonment. This process of self-awareness and discovery is complex involving defences used in response to anxiety-provoking situations such as projection and introjection.

Bollas (1988, 1992) develops Winnicott's (1960/1990) concept of 'true self' and discusses something he calls *psychic idiom* and for Bollas this idiom needs to 'dissipate' so that healthy psychic structures, which he calls psychic genera, can be formed. These structures allow subjects to experience aliveness and psychic growth, through responding to the unique desires and needs of the individual. It is part of the way we create psychic meaning. Idiom is analogous to a language and I think Bollas has chosen a word usually associated with turn of phrase because he wants to account for the ways in which the unique, unconscious self is articulated.

Objects are used in the process of idiom dissipation. The process begins with subjects being open to object use. Psychic idiom is a mixture of the earliest experiences in infancy, life experiences, and events, and our inherited disposition. There is a forwards/ backwards motion associated with idiom, where individuals move from a recent to a distant past and back to the present in response to a particular stimulus.²⁴ Laplanche's (1999) concept '*afterwardsness*' is also relevant and will be discussed in section 2.5.

Bollas is concerned with the ways in which objects stimulate us. He uses Freud's (1900) work on dreams to examine the 'manifest' and 'latent' content associated with object encounters in the waking world. Psychic idiom is two-fold in that the *form* of an object (and of a dream) is as important as the *content*. For Bollas, forms are ways through which we can speak the self. Bollas argues the terrain of the object encounter is in some aspects like a transitional space and, following Winnicott, calls this the 'third space' (1992). It is, however, much more than a place of reality testing and anxiety management, although these activities may occur. Character, taste and the search for aesthetic experiences are linked. As noted above, the mother is the first object we encounter but following this we learn that we can use objects to 'bring parts of ourselves to life' (Phillips 2002:54). Developing Bion, Bollas proposes the mother functions like a container into which the infant

²⁴ See also Radstone 2000 for methods associated with memory work techniques.

projects and through this projective identification we invest objects (people and things) with bits of ourselves. In infancy we project troublesome thoughts, phantasies and feelings into the mother, who manages these uncomfortable feelings and sensations for the baby through holding onto them, then soothing and generally meeting the infant's needs, such as breast feeding. She sends back difficult feelings to the infant but in a less malevolent and manageable form. This is an important point of consideration as the research raises questions in the data chapters about the idea of projection into a text, which can operate as a container, but a text cannot 'work' on the projection for return anything back to the subject, which ultimately distinguishes human objects from 'things' - or what Sophie calls 'stuff' in Chapter Five.

I want to continue with the idea that we project our character onto the things around us, (O'Shaughnessy, 1994), and this is also an expression of 'taste' that has both social and psychic symbolic meaning. Objects can be used as 'containers' for emotional self-states. When we encounter objects, some become *evocative* (Bollas, 1992, 2000) because they tap into our psychic idiom and we respond:

Certain objects, like psychic 'keys', open doors to unconsciously intense and rich experience in which we articulate the self that we are through the elaborating character of our response (1992:17)

I have introduced the idea of transitional objects, but the seeds of the evocative object are sown prior to this. The first object relation is with the mother/ primary carer who is a 'transformational object' (Bollas 1987, 1989) and in later life objects hold out the potential of transformation. The mother maintains the infant's environment; the child is made safe, fed, kept warm and the minutiae of its physical environment, including light and sound, are maintained and adjusted to its needs. Bollas sees this less as a traditional object relation in more experiential terms, as a process associated with internal and external gratification that alters and transforms:

An object that is experientially identified by the infant with the process of the alteration of self-experience; an identification that emerges from symbiotic relating, where the first object is 'known' not by cognising it into an object relation, but is known as a recurrent experience of being a kind of existential, as opposed to representational knowing (Bollas 1987:84)

Bollas maintains that aesthetic and other forms of self-experiences such as play, which work on our senses, hold out the potential for a transformational experience. Clearly this applies to film and television. This is a slightly different inflection on what film theory noted as a return to earliest infancy in the cinematic experience as it broadens the scope of objects available. In adult life we use objects as part of a *cumulative* process of self-elaboration. In later chapters I will explore the ways in which trauma interferes with this process and a particular form of conservative object use can develop (see Chapter Five).

Evocative objects are used to disseminate idiom. Bollas (1992:34) says objects stimulate individuals in six ways and are summarised:

- Sensorially (materially and embodied)
- Structurally (*use potential promotes experience on the basis of the 'character' of the object and its use value*).
- Conceptually (thinking and thought both conscious and unconscious)
- Symbolically (as a 'container', selectively endowed with past experiences and self-states through projective identification and I would argue this links particularly with the following type)
- Mnemonically (concerned with memory generation and where a present object or an object from the past stores a self-state from a particular time)
- Projectively (mnemonic objects may be evocative of the past but are used projectively in the present to form association which allow the self to project itself and its internal objects in the here and now).

Static, inanimate objects have qualities or 'character', in part to do with their use value and, for Bollas, using objects and allowing the self to be used or played by objects is essential for psychic growth and survival. As I have noted, the experiential aspect of the cinematic experience has been prioritised over other possible understandings of object use. The six categories Bollas proposes, however, allow space to further develop some aspects of film theory through exploration of the particular qualities of the medium and the text and how these are taken up and transformed in use.

A text will have an objective history but the viewer may also bring their biographical history to the text. This history is not static as it comes alive in use and this can change at any time. I want to argue that this occurs predominantly in two ways, through particular forms of identification: idiomatic and biographical identification or a combination of the two.

Our encounters with objects can be sudden and by chance as the explained earlier in the example of Mary and *Father of the Bride*. A significant idea found in Laura Mulvey's (1975) work concerned the way the narrative momentarily 'halts' to allow the camera to focus on the female form thus giving the viewer 'visual pleasure'. I have borrowed the idea that the narrative 'halts' to argue that when a viewer encounters a text that is going to have a significant emotional impact the viewer momentarily halts the narrative. At this moment they temporarily leave the narrative, which will move on, but the viewer will not move forward with the narrative, like Mary they will be caught in a moment of emotion or they find a strong memory shifts their thoughts away from the text. Therefore they do not linger on the image indulging in visual pleasure. It is also possible to use Bollas (1992, 2000) to theorise this as a manifestation of 'heightened' self- experience (Bollas 1992, 2000) associated with the work of psychic idiom, which occurs when the viewer meets the text and stops for a moment to connect and dissipate psychic idiom. This is a powerful phenomenon provoking strong emotional reactions, and is not uniform. Although object form is important, it is not dictated by the nature of the apparatus (cinematic or televisual in this case) alone.

Bollas gives the example of his experience when he encounters a swing (1992:36). At some point in his childhood swings became an object for projection and a container for the difficulties he experienced when his father returned home from the war and his parents began having problems. The swing, whose *formal* nature and *use value* should have signified fresh air, freedom and a carefree, childhood existence, in fact became a melancholic object for him and this feeling and association has continued throughout his life. Objects therefore stir up responses other than the merely visual, which is only one of many sensory starting points. In line with the symbolic aspect of objects, but different to the reality testing function of Winnicott's (1971)³⁵ transitional objects, Bollas looks to the ways in which objects become conservative and hold preserved self-states that prevailed in a child's life when he could not comprehend fully what otherwise was a highly significant experience (1992:19). Data analysis chapters provide evidence of texts used in this way and also describe the more dynamic uses of texts.

Bollas retains a notion of the transitional functions of encounters with objects and he acknowledges objects can be used to soothe and manage anxieties. Although we can make objects symbolically significant, at the same time they also retain their conventional use-value. Object use operates therefore on the borders between the subjective and objective worlds. I will demonstrate that this is not always straightforward, as various traumas associated with family such as loss of love meet with the constraints and demands of an external social world and together place pressure on the individual so that it cannot be open to object use or its own needs and desires. It is often in childhood that the child learns to regulate its idiomatic needs and adapts to the will of the other. I will explore some of the emotional costs associated with the adoption of a distinct habitus where the acquisition and display of cultural capital dominates. Taste, therefore, cannot be thought of as transparent in either social or psychoanalytic terms. Later chapters will also present evidence of the ways in which individuals use viewing as part of a process of emotional survival, as well as for development, transformation and growth. This, however, is not the same as the celebratory and resistant interpretations of the uses of popular culture found in cultural studies.

This thesis does not abandon the notion of pleasure but acknowledges that pleasure can often be a mask. We can seek out objects for them to work their evocative magic on us. The 'use value' of a film for instance is to entertain and provide us with a fascinating experience. The viewer also brings something of the self to the text or object. The objects we choose and our responses to them have the qualities of syntax; they form part of a sentence structure or 'character syntax' for a speaking of the self Bollas, (1992) argues: 'We can learn much about any person's self-experiencing by observing his selection of objects' (1992:32) and the objects a

³⁵ This particular use refers to the transitional stage in the child's development as one where he must learn to recognise and accept reality. Winnicott (1971:4) focuses on the nature of 'illusory' experience which is associated with transitional objects and has a slightly different and more specific focus to that of Bollas who associates the object with a variety of forms of self-experience.

person selects such as literature, music, film (and television) are a 'valued part of the fieldwork' (1989:18).

Utilising Bourdieu we could draw conclusions about the class background from the objects selected. However, Bolas would urge caution with this approach precisely because 'choice of object tells us little about the private use of the object' (1989). It is only in its use that the object comes alive for the user. Ethnographic and reception studies concerned with meanings are often missing this important unconscious dimension. When the research began, I initially approached texts and viewing practices as separate entities. It soon became clear that in the context of home-viewing the text selected was often inextricably linked with particular viewing practices and uses that were meaningful and this will be illustrated and examined in later chapters.

2.5 Repetition, memory and trauma

I have noted technological developments, which facilitated the growth of new and intense relationships with texts, in particular the ability to repeat viewings or particular moments as Walkerdine's *Video Replay* demonstrated. This study focused on the psycho-social effects and uses of the rewind function of video. Walkerdine asserted that the repeated viewing of violence in the film by the working class man connected to traumas associated with his class and gender as it was lived both psychically and socially. She saw his behaviour as an example of a 'psychology of survival' (1986, 1997). Bainbridge and Yates provide a valuable study (2007) that explored the relationship between DVD technology and masculinity. This study focuses on the relationship between repeated viewings of films, which deal with 'masculinity' replay technology such as DVD technological convergence, and industry pressures to reissue and market 'classic' films. This trend in marketing is shown to be symptomatic of cultural responses to the 'crisis' of masculinities involved with creating nostalgia for traditional forms of masculinity that men may fantasise have been lost. Texts and practices are viewed *together* to illustrate features of Freud's theories of trauma with particular reference to masculinity (see Chapter Six). The study is valuable because it shows that identity, 'pleasure' and trauma can be very closely linked in the viewing experience, and this has both personal and wider cultural resonance for viewers.

When I began this research project I did not specifically set out to research trauma. However, it became clear after reviewing interview data that the concept of trauma needed to be addressed. Superficially it would seem common sense that viewers/spectators return to texts because they enjoy them, as some film theorists argue, for a range of repeated 'cinematic' pleasures. However, as Sophie says: "I sometimes put on things that I know will make me feel bad.... I don't know why I watch it.... It makes me feel worse". This might make sense if the text was a documentary or film with difficult subject matter. In most cases the films and programmes interviewees found difficult and upsetting were in fact very mundane, often light-hearted popular texts from Disney films to comedy. This implies the question; why would a viewer choose on numerous occasions to sit and watch

something that makes them feel bad, and how should this be understood? It also begs the question; what is the nature of the impact the text has had on the viewer?

I will start to address this problem by thinking about 'repetition' in psychoanalytic terms. We cannot observe the unconscious directly; it is inferred through symptoms and to repeat has traditionally inferred trauma. Trauma is sometimes referred to as a threat of a break in the continuity of self that the subject cannot tolerate and is unable to repair. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973:465) describe this as "an event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in psychical organisation". In Sophie's case this revolves around her inability to mourn ongoing processes of abandonment by her parents. However, I am aware that the term is often used to account for the everyday conflicts and disappointments, which are common to all, and this is not the same as serious psychological trauma resulting in severe mental and behavioural disturbance.

This repetition can be a feature of the psychical organisation that results in behaviours, which attempt to respond to a trauma. 'Repetition Compulsion'¹⁶ in Freudian accounts (1920/1984) is a form of remembering that has evaded mourning. Repetitive behaviours or memories, which go over a particular scenario, are said to prevent mourning (Freud 1899/1960). Screen memories are an example of the way some traumas are dealt with defensively. Here, a seemingly innocuous memory (perhaps from childhood) is associated with a strong emotional response that is not fully understood by the person or why the memory should merit this response (Freud, 1899/1960, 1901/2000; Rosenbaum, 1998) (see Chapter Four). Sutton (2004), concentrating on cinema, proposes all spectators carry a 'cinema history'. I would broaden this to include 'textual' history (including television, literature and 'art'). This history is constantly returned to and 're-translated'. In the light of biographical experiences and events. Viewing history is expressed in both diachronic and synchronic perspectives towards particular texts. Sutton concentrates on film but adopts a valuable concept (2004) from Laplanche: 'apres-coup' or 'afterwardsness'. This concept is commonly used in theories of trauma; however, it is also of particular use to this research because it is also a theory of memory, temporality and translation. Trauma has two moments, the first being the actual event, but it is not perceived as traumatic at the time. Freud initially linked this to sexual trauma. The child may be confronted by the trauma of the primal scene for instance. Initially he does not interpret the scene as traumatic because he lacks the developmental understanding to realise the sexual nature or consequence of the scene. It is only at a *later* more developed stage that the child realises what he saw was traumatic. Other forms of 'evidence' coming from the child's / adult's

¹⁶ Tania Modleski in her notable psychoanalytically informed study of soap operas *Loving With A Vengeance* (1982 New York Routledge) uses repetition compulsion to account for identification with the villainess found in all American soap operas. Her argument is that women tune in everyday to see the villainess, who is continually faced with events that would make most totally helpless, somehow manages to turn these events, if only temporarily, to her advantage. Modleski argues that repetition here concerns fantasies of power about the rejection of feminine passivity and mastery of events. So to some limited extent it is compatible with the way I use the term in this research as a return in part to motivate some kind of change.

experience can lead to a past event interpreted in the light of the present as anxiety provoking and traumatic (see Chapter Four). The important idea here is that the past is always interpreted from the current position the individual is in. Experience and the memory are changed in the light of current experience. However, this is a kind of to and fro movement where the past is in the present but the present shapes the memory of the past. This can be used to explain the shifting identifications I described in the introduction. This is also why there cannot be one definitive reading of a film; our readings of films and television texts do not stay fixed but move and change over time whilst retaining some core features. In fact, afterwardsness is a useful way to think about responses and meaning in different viewings of the same text. The viewer is always in a different position, changed by the present and other experiences between viewings.

As the example of *Father of the Bride* above showed, Mary's strong emotional response involved the long history of her intense relationship with her father, and this was reactivated in response to the interview situation but more significantly by the impending marriage of her idolised only son. Sutton's ideas are premised on traditional approaches that see cinema as a unique, intense psychic experience. He also reads the trauma from the text. I would argue that similar processes can occur in response to texts viewed in the home and this calls into question the part of his argument that rests on the idea of sensory over stimulation and cinema. The home is a very different but equally powerful setting.

Most viewers have had the experience of going to the cinema and seeing a sad film and may have struggled to fight back tears. Mainstream films are designed to illicit emotion in the viewer; it is part of their function or use-value. Theorists have offered plausible accounts as to why this happens and it has been understood generically as a function of narrative organisation within the text²⁷ (see Neale 1986). Neale noted that 'time' within a narrative is a feature of moments when the audience cries. Time relates to a sense of regret and powerlessness to change irreversible circumstances, but circumstances that perhaps could have changed if a different decision or action had been taken. I have found a number of my interviewees return to films, not melodramas, which position 'time' in the narrative as something one can take control of in fantasy (*Back To The Future*), or that feature forms of 'time travelling' (*Big* and *Forest Gump*), or where time is under threat (*Simon Birch*).

This research explores texts that viewers had strong emotional responses to, from tears, to anger or fear. When questioned, all my interviewees linked their strong response to a biographical event or demonstrated it was invested with biographical significance. In almost all cases this response took place when viewing in the home. It is possible that films viewed at the cinema that have an emotional effect on the viewer can be purchased on DVD and the emotional response is then explored in further viewings at home. The cinema then, may present the viewer with

²⁷ See Neale's (1986) study of Melodrama traditionally associated with 'weepies'. He notes the way narrative events are motivated and ordered. These films tend to be marked by an excess of affect and effect over cause.

something they wish to explore further and it is at home that this takes place. This suggests another feature of the use-value of cinema as an activity. I noted earlier moments when the viewer temporarily brings the narrative to a halt and leaves the text, and I found that this is usually biographically significant though it may not consciously be acknowledged. I want to propose that this halting is a psycho-social response to a combination of biographical identification, idiomatic identification, or in some cases, trauma.

Sutton (2004) says of cinema; the sheer 'volume and traumatic intensity of visual and aural stimuli' leave spectators with 'enigmatic signifiers' which may trigger the recollection of a previously unconscious trauma that has been repressed. Then, through a process of afterwardsness the spectator is provoked in to a process of retranslation, where identity is actively formed, reformed and performed in response to what is seen on the screen, and is not in the control of the text. Examples of trauma and moments of struggle, from the birth of a sibling, traditionally associated with generating hostility in response to the trauma of 'displacement', to the feelings of abandonment associated with divorce will be provided (see Chapter Four). Data analysis chapters will show the ways viewers use films and other texts in response to this.

Traumas associated with lived experience often take the form of repetition compulsions and repetition scenarios and are lived as 'character' (Bollas, 1992; Layton, 2004). Our habitus, the things we like or dislike, are manifestations of this. Sophie watches films that make her feel bad. Daniel uses some films cathartically to make him cry. Chris watches films at home that he knows make him feel "twitchy" and uneasy and cause him to be unable to relax. These examples may not point to specific traumas, (although there is evidence of trauma in some cases) but as I will demonstrate in the 'private use of the object' (Bollas 1989:26) they relate to the way individuals manage personal emotional and social difficulties and loss. They are utilised in moments of emotional struggle.

In *Video Replay* Walkerdine related emotional struggle to coping. She questioned the idea of viewing as 'escapism' and a form of momentary wish fulfilment, arguing that 'escape' for working-class families is a contradictory space full of loss as well as desire. The now much quoted concept of fighting (seen in the film) was used to examine processes of signification in the family, which, like dreams, have both manifest and latent content. Afterwardsness, and also memory, point to relations of signification being constituted in forwards and backwards movements. Signifiers in films (and television programmes) resonate with wider signifying practices which carry their meanings from both past and present. All signifiers 'generate their meanings from the living out of historically specific relations' (Walkerdine 1986:294). Intertextuality offers another perspective as it concerns the way in which things can be made to mean something in one area of life because of the meanings they carry somewhere else. Hence the concept of 'fighting' - the focus of what I would call 'Mr Cole's' repetition scenario, created from *Rocky II*, resonated, as Walkerdine notes, with many aspects of his life. For instance, around physical labour and dependence on the body, 'fighting' the system (which labelled his daughter a 'problem'), and his

uncertainty around gender roles and his masculinity¹⁸ (see also Bainbridge and Yates 2007).

Repetition compulsions or scenarios are alive in the unconscious as internal objects. They are not simply representations; they are felt or phantasised about as concrete objects living in the person. How this object is experienced is dependent on the experience of external reality, but external reality is, in turn, perceived through the internal lens of phantasy (Hinshelwood 1989). Internal objects, then, are not passive; they are part of dynamic processes of mediation between inner and outer worlds. Film and television *moments* (in contrast to film theorists who focus on the whole film) which 'impact' on the viewer are turned into these specific internal objects and are returned to in an attempt to either mourn or evade mourning. This illustrates the psycho-social nature of repetition scenarios which are both psychic internal creations and cultural appropriations neither reducible to the other (Layton, 2004). For Bollas, (1992) repetitive creativity can be idiomatic but it may also be symptomatic of a symbolic return to a trauma. Simultaneously, emotional turbulence generated in creative encounters is connected to a search for a change in the status quo. Similarly for Layton, repetition compulsions are not just the wish to go over the same trauma again and again but are motivated by the wish to find a way out of the trauma, however minute. Later chapters will offer in-depth exploration of instances of favourite or significant textual 'moments' as repetition scenarios. I will examine instances of struggle and trauma and the specific ways texts and certain viewing practices in relation to particular texts, feature in this attempt to work over past, and present, difficulties that individuals face.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I began the review by explaining that film theorists were interested in political questions concerning ideology and power as part of a critique of patriarchal and capitalist societies. Many Media and Cultural Studies researchers' questions concerning race, class and gender were also part of attempts to formulate strategies for political change. The latter part of this chapter has attempted to show how it is possible to use psycho-social research critically to understand the emotional costs associated with the effects of power and lived social experience. I have described some key psychoanalytic ideas and concepts to show how they can enhance a number of the most influential contemporary social theories. I illustrated some of the limitations found in fan literature and suggested possible ways in which unanswered questions raised in this kind of research might be addressed through the adoption of psychoanalysis to enhance sociological and cultural approaches. I also introduced the ideas of important theorists whose work I utilise in my data analysis chapters such as Winnicott, Bollas and Bourdieu, whose ideas I suggest can

¹⁸ Walkerdine utilised her access to biographical details from the original research project she was involved in to inform her interpretations. See discussion of method and biography in chapter 3. She also illustrated the weakness of traditional psychoanalytic (as opposed to psych-social) approaches that would reduce the minutiae of his life to unresolved Oedipal issues.

be used to formulate a way through the divisions and gaps in previous audience research. The next chapter explains how this can be done practically through a discussion of methodology and method.

CHAPTER THREE

PSYCHO-SOCIAL METHODS AND AUDIENCE RESEARCH

When a researcher selects a research method the decision is, in part, based on the epistemological assumptions the researcher holds about the nature of the subject, reality and how it is possible to obtain reliable knowledge. Chapters One and Two outlined psychoanalytic film theory, sociological and cultural studies approaches to the audiences. It was noted that a range of methods were adopted including textual analysis, favoured by film theory and some reception studies and empirical research methods including letters, interviews and ethnographic participant observation in sociological and cultural studies audience research. It was proposed that psycho-social approaches to audience research could bridge some of these divisions, but a different approach to traditional methods was required.

Empirical media research has been concerned with understanding how meaning is made in the interpretation of texts and in terms of identity and power. Generally, empirical audience research begins from the assumption that it is only cultural and social differences, such as class and gender, that are significant in knowledge production (Seiter 1990). Theories of 'communication' associated with media studies do not recognise or acknowledge unconscious communication either theoretically or in relation to empirical research situations. This chapter argues that there is an opportunity for a new approach to communication and research interviewing in audience studies.

Johnson et al (2004:50) describe approaches to knowledge claims in cultural studies methodology theory as falling into one of three camps: 'interpretive', 'critical' and 'empirical'. This research straddles all three camps as it is interested in understanding both my own experiences and the lives of my interviewees. It is critical in that it is sensitive to questions of power in relation to the lived experience of social class and gender, and it is empirical as it is engaged with conscious and unconscious forms of observation and close reading of texts and interview data. However, it does this from a different position to conventional approaches to data collection and interpretation. This will be elaborated below where I discuss models of communication that include unconscious processes.

This chapter outlines theoretical ontological and epistemological assumptions about research subjects and knowledge generation which inform the research design, illustrating this with examples from my research and data collection. I will then discuss the research design, including the method, sample, and ethics. The chapter also makes use of a case study: *Making Distinctions in Television Audience Research: case study of a troubling interview* (1990). Based on empirical research by two experienced and respected audience researchers, Ellen Seiter and Hans Borchers, this study illustrates some of the central limitations of 'social' and 'cultural power' interpretations in some audience research. One of the most important aims of my research has been to offer a new method for understanding audience experience. There are few studies in media research which allow an evaluation of psychoanalytically informed methods against traditional approaches. Seiter's

research addresses issues of 'difficult feelings', something this chapter explores in relation to researcher subjectivity, but it is also unusual because it contains a transcript of the interview in question. I use this to demonstrate that psycho-social methods can effectively produce knowledge to enhance understanding of audiences *and* texts.

3.1 Psycho-social approaches and the subject

Psycho-social perspectives outlined in Chapter Two argued that the social and the psychoanalytic are inextricably linked. Object relations were introduced as a useful model for audience research because they offer ways of understanding social relations and how they are adopted (introjected) and used (projectively), as Chodorow says, in processes of making 'unconscious personal meaning' (1999:14). Also, the theories and concepts can be used to understand the way commonplace 'objects' such as films and television are related to.

Empirical media research has often concentrated on questions of identity in relation to viewing. I explained in the introduction that I prefer the term subjectivity because identity has often been figured 'socially' at the expense of an understanding of inner processes. Craib (1989, 1998) is sceptical about the term 'identity' as it is figured in sociological accounts describing this particular approach to identity as something that is socially constructed. He views sociological accounts as concentrating too much on the constitutive significance of 'linguistic' approaches. Identity in these accounts comes from the outside, with the human subject as the product of discursive structures constituted through power relations and disciplinary practices (Craib 1989, 1998). Social construction theories are important politically as they dispensed with the idea that we all possess a 'free, autonomous individuality that is unique to us and develops as part of our spontaneous encounters with the world' (Mansfield 2000:11). However this does not offer any account of agency and the individual. Mansfield notes that there are other approaches to the subject where the psychoanalytic subject is made in encounters with family and later with culture (Mansfield 2000:12). As he observes, the two psychoanalytic and social constructionist approaches are distinct and often seen in opposition. Despite the idea of the rational subject being dismantled Craib has argued that a considerable amount of sociological work on identity only ever deals with identity from the 'outside' as the 'end product of sociological processes' or discourse. Such theories cannot fully explain 'agency' or the significance of internal processes that may account for individual action and motivation. Craib is particularly critical of the emphasis placed on language. He notes that even the enthusiastic post-structuralist take up of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories of the subject who is made in relation to language, ultimately ends up positing a 'social' subject. (Craib 1998:10).

Craib, along with some feminist critics, is noted for promoting the idea of a psychoanalytically informed sociology. He points out that linguistic approaches either ignore or are completely unable to address affect, emotions and embodiment. This research is interested in moments where emotion takes the viewer by surprise and, for Craib, the body and affect cannot be seen entirely as

manifestations of discourse. They belong to a realm of experience that defies language. For Bollas (1992) the 'unthought known' describes an elusive, pre-cognitive and embodied form of knowledge that is outside of language and consciousness. It is 'known' by the individual through embodied affect but cannot be mentalised. This is a radical view of knowledge as something existing between inner and outer, conscious and unconscious worlds and is elusive to traditional forms of scientific observation based on cause-effect logic. Hollway argues that subjects are the result of psycho-social processes 'in which internal and external processes are co-constitutive; that is they have effects both ways' (2009:217). The idea that the inner world gives shape to the outer was explored in Chapter Two. This chapter focuses in particular on what this means for empirical research and the research relationship.

Objectivity has traditionally been a pivotal concept in positivist research and was accepted as being the guarantor of reliable knowledge production. Objectivity has been subject to critical scrutiny from social construction theories (Schwandt 2000), post-structuralism, postmodern and feminist approaches (Olesen 2000). Common to many of these theories was the idea that the knowledge of the subject existing outside of its constitution in language was impossible.

Reality and the way we understand the world is thought to be a social process made between social actors or researcher and 'researched'. Observations of reality made by researchers are said to be constructs in language, co-produced between social actors, shaped by institutional discourses and confirmed by social consensus. This suggests that the interview-based approach adopted here can only be analysed as a linguistic text paying attention only to what is said, as found in some discursive approaches. Psycho-social researchers might agree with the proposed redundancy of the unitary rational subject but they are not entirely in agreement with social construction positions on language. For psycho-social researchers it is not a case of either / or understanding conscious social processes or unconscious processes. I propose psycho-social research offers a form of critical realism that starts from a more sophisticated and pragmatic view of the subject and its relationship to reality. Another important feature of this research is to understand experience. Feminist critical theorists have been influential in putting experience on the research agenda, theorising it in relation to questions of class, gender, race and power. This research demonstrates that psycho-social approaches are not in conflict with critical positions within feminism and cultural studies which seek to use experience to observe, describe and understand social power. The research findings in later chapters demonstrate what happens to the outside world, discourse and social organisation as it is internalised and when the inner world is externalised. As Hollway notes, object relations can illuminate 'social relations, while concentrating on how they get introjected and projected and the transformations that occur in the internal world' (2008b:2). Cultural studies have often used the term 'bricolage' to explain the way oppressed groups use 'whatever was on hand' (in culture) to resist the effects of power. This research takes up this idea but rejects the idea of 'resistance' for Walkerdine's 'psychology of survival' (1998) to understand the way research into the experience of viewing can illuminate complex processes of identity

formation and response to the ordinary, conflictual, and inevitable (Hollway 2009) features of life experience (Roseneil 2006; Craib 1998). For me, this is the political dimension of psycho-social audience research. I want to introduce some central theoretical approaches which inform the research design.

3.2 Key concepts and ideas informing the research design and data analysis

Psycho-social research views the societal parts of analysis as inextricable from the psychoanalytic (Hollway 2009). The view of the subject is of one who is not always cognitive and rational (although subjects hold the capacities for both), but rather is one whose subjectivity has at its core a dynamic, desirous and conflictual unconscious that effects the way individuals relate to self, other objects (animate and inanimate) and external reality. As Chodorow states: 'meaning as we experience it always comes from both without and within and is an inextricable mixture of socio-cultural and historically contextualised on the one hand and the personally psychodynamic and biographically contextualised on the other' (1999:3).

Hollway argues that social relations are important but prioritises 'unconscious intersubjective' forms of relationality as 'founding principals' of the self (2009:216). This begins in earliest infancy where the experiences and relationships with objects (the mother in particular) shape the way reality is approached by the developing infant and continues in adult life. This has a particular bearing on the idea of objectivity as object relations propose reality cannot just be approached cognitively, it is known emotionally. The experience of being dependent upon another, usually the mother, and how that dependency is managed is significant. Feeding, for instance, in infancy is a biological need and the child must be fed to survive, but the *experience* of hunger as something terrifying and painful is psychological.

Winnicott (1965b, 1965c) developing Klein's (1952) ideas recognised the significance of the dependency in the first relationship with the mother. Infants adopt a range of defences such as splitting, projection, introjection and omnipotence (Klein 1952; Winnicott 1971; Bion 1962) in response to the overwhelming fact of their dependency on another. Segal (1992) notes that for both Klein and Winnicott, the child does not see the mother as separate or a whole object but can be seen as a 'part object' such as the breast or as an extension of the child to be ruthlessly used to meet its needs (Klein 1946). Klein argued that far from being a benign, passive being, the child is filled with a range of powerful impulses and feelings including aggression. Hunger, therefore, may be associated with rage followed by delight, once this need has been met. These powerful conflict filled experiences are mediated by unconscious phantasy (Klein, 1952 in Mitchell 1986:53). Susan Isaacs's (1952) paper '*The nature and Function of Phantasy*' is widely recognised as representative of a 'Kleinian' position on unconscious phantasy (Mitchell 1986). In this piece she argues that unconscious phantasy is present in all conscious and unconscious mental activity (Isaacs 1952) and perception (Hinshelwood 1989). Consequently it is never possible to experience others, in research, or any other situations, without the presence of varying degrees of unconscious phantasy. For the baby, then, there is no distinction between phantasy and reality.

Anxiety is another pervasive concept for Klein (1929/ 1985, 1946, 1948) and is often present alongside phantasy. When the child is distressed because it is hungry or is uncomfortable due to the sensation of a soiled nappy, the infant does not experience this hunger or excrement as something separate, but phantasises that the object is an attack. Anxiety is generated in response to fears that the object is actually lodged inside the child and threatens his safety and survival. This experience may be preserved internally, as a bad object, which can attack the child from within. On the other hand, when the child experiences something pleasant he preserves this in phantasy as a good internal object. This explains how the inner world can be populated with a range of good and bad objects. Defence mechanisms are employed to protect against the anxiety generated in response to threatening experiences. Splitting is used to preserve the good by keeping it separate from the bad (Klein 1946: Segal, 1992). When anxious the infant may also project or place something (usually an unpleasant or bad feeling) into another object. Introjection involves taking in parts of something good and making it a part of the self. It is the child's omnipotent need for control that motivates the use of unconscious defence mechanisms. This is one of the ways difficult and overwhelming feelings, of dread for instance (Klein in Mitchell 1986:133), are managed. If a child can master and control his objects then the object cannot threaten the child. These 'primitive' (Hinshelwood, 1989) defence mechanisms are associated with the paranoid-schizoid position, which is characterised by persecutory anxiety and phantasy. The child is not concerned with any notion of 'reality', which can be objectively perceived; it is only concerned with its desire to manage its anxiety and allay fears of annihilation.

In this position, where objects may be known through projective defence mechanisms, it is the child's *internal* state that governs whether the object is perceived as threatening or benign and inner reality dominates the perception of outer reality. This mode of experience is divided between: efforts at managing psychic pain and efforts at the evacuation of pain through the defensive use of omnipotent thinking and denial (Ogden, 1989:19). Omnipotence will be discussed in section 3.5.

For theorists such as Klein, Winnicott and Bion, the mother is an important object as she is the route through which the infant is introduced to reality. Her response to the child either diminishes or confirms the child's phantasies and this continues as the child develops. The Depressive Position, Klein states, is marked by less malignant projective identification but still with the aim of omnipotent control, and the ability to tolerate 'good' and 'bad' in objects without feeling that safety is compromised. Here, persecutory anxiety is replaced by feelings of guilt for the damage done to loved objects in phantasy (Segal, 1992:38). This represents a more mature position where efforts are made to 'maximise the loving aspect' of the relationship with 'whole' rather than part objects (Ogden, 1989). Here, the possibility of reparation and the ability to tolerate ambivalent feelings means that reality no longer needs to be brought into line with an anxiety dominated inner world, but can be tolerated and therefore perceived more realistically. From a

relationship with 'objects' in the paranoid-schizoid position, the relationship changes to one between 'subjects' (Ogden, 1989). However, as Ogden (1989), notes the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are not *developmental* stages; we oscillate throughout life between both positions. The important point is that in situations where anxiety is present for researchers or interviewees it is necessary to understand how there may be times when phantasy and the inner world will impact on the research situation. I use the case study of Seiter's audience research discussed later to show how this can be a resource and used in knowledge production.

Winnicott contends that we learn to 'experience life' in what he calls, the 'transitional' space (1965, 1971). For Winnicott there are not only inner and outer worlds, there is a third area which is 'an intermediate area of *experiencing* to which inner reality and external life both contribute' (1971:3).³⁹ This is a space that is neither subjective nor objective and has implications for epistemologies that 'draw a line between subject and object' (Young, 2009). At birth the mother foregoes her own needs and becomes maternally 'absorbed' letting the child's needs take precedence (Winnicott, 1971:14). The mother allows the illusion of the child's omnipotence to flourish and the infant sees her as an extension of himself under his omnipotent control. As the child develops the mother gently frustrates the child, by not meeting his needs immediately for instance, or forcing periods of separation upon the child. This allows the child to learn that objects are not under its control and also to recognise the mother as a whole object with a separate existence to the child. The transitional space is an area where the child learns what 'is me' and 'not me' (Winnicott, 1971) experimenting and experiencing the world subjectively and objectively, as I will explain below.

In the transitional space the child learns to be creative through play and the use of objects. It is for this reason that Winnicott's ideas have been attractive to some cultural researchers (see Hills, 2002). Processes that begin in this space, particularly around object use and illusion in childhood, eventually become the space of artistic creativity and 'culture' in adult life (Young, 2009: Busch 1974). Unconscious phantasy imbues encounters with *objects*; so, in early life the child treats the objects he encounters as being an extension of himself. Objects he uses are not presented to him by a separate other. The child believes the object or 'subjective object' (Winnicott, 1971:95) to be an extension of self and this is also a form of subjective omnipotence. The frustration and fear associated with the realisation that he is dependent on another is managed through the use of transitional objects. For instance, in periods of separation, which are anxiety-provoking for the infant, the child selects a toy, which comes to symbolise the presence of the mother, and soothes the child in her absence until she returns. The nature of these objects is discussed further with data examples in Chapter Five. Once the child learns to perceive objects, principally the mother, as separate with her own character and needs, the child can learn to 'reality test', eventually learning to 'objectively

³⁹ For a discussion of the differences between the approaches of Winnicott and Klein see Robert Young's *Potential Space: Transitional Phenomena* on line paper <http://human-nature.com/rmyoung/papers/paper55.html>

perceive' objects. Here, the illusory experience allows the child to oscillate between subjective omnipotence and that, which is objectively 'perceived,' (1971:4). From a subjective perception of objects as an extension of himself, the child learns to see the mother as an object 'objectively' perceived. Here, 'learning' is a process that is subjective and is developed through intersubjective, unconscious and emotional processes rather than purely cognitive processes.

The transitional space and transitional object use, along with phantasy and defensive mechanisms, such as projection and splitting, are present throughout life. They can be utilised in all situations where creativity of thought and perception are needed or to manage anxiety. The fundamental insight of psychoanalysis is that: 'the infant remains within us, the unconscious is timeless and must be catered for – it does not disappear with our access to maturity.... the infant plays an essential role, in a modified form in our adult 'life'. (Craib, 1998:53). Relational theorists focus on the object or relationship seeking nature of the infant and suggest that relationship patterns may develop in response to disappointments and these may be repeated throughout life in response to anxiety-provoking situations (Segal, 1992:37-8).

The method I have chosen incorporates narrative, objective historical analysis and biographical data which all address forms of 'history' and how this relates to viewing memories and particular texts. Interviews are about relationships and communication between two people, each with their own subjectivities.

These psychoanalytic insights are relevant for helping to understand the dynamics of the research and interview situation.

The preceding discussion has suggested that it is impossible to understand 'reality', and therefore the knowledge claims researchers make about reality as something purely objective. The perception of objects and reality is mediated through unconscious and intersubjective processes and learning has emotional components which must be considered in relation to the research relationship and data collection. Criticisms aimed at objectivity have focussed on questions of power and gender and the role played by objectivity in masking power differences. The trend towards researcher 'reflexivity' goes hand in hand with critiques of power as moving some way towards overcoming this problem and producing more comprehensive research findings. Below, I will explore objectivity as related to unconscious processes of desire and omnipotence. Building on the idea of knowledge of reality involving processes that are subjective, objective, anxiety provoking and imbued with phantasy. I will explore the practical implications for method and data interpretation in this research. This also illustrates the strength of an approach, which builds on the insights of object relations ideas and concepts for understanding both psychic and social processes.

3.3 Methods: Free Association Narrative and Biographical Interviewing

Free Association Narrative Interviewing (FANI) is a psychoanalytically informed interview method. Gestalt psychology argues that humans do not perceive things in

isolation but they organise and configure experience into meaningful wholes or meaning frames (Nelson-Jones, 2001). Following Chodorow (1999), experience is made meaningful consciously and unconsciously. Qualitative data analysis of interviews has generally focussed only on data that appears directly relevant to the topic, as seen in the example of Seiter's soap opera research below. Information that 'doesn't fit' because it seems off topic is often discarded. FANI is an appropriate method for psycho-social research as it views the interview as 'whole' rather than as a set of isolated, transparent statements. This has a bearing on data interpretation, as data chapters show, because emotionally significant themes emerge but these are not consciously articulated or follow in a logical discussion. For instance, Chapter Four demonstrates the significance of key moments in Mary and Sue's childhoods concerned with the birth of siblings.

As can be seen in the data analysis chapters significant themes and concepts emerged across the interviews (and letters). However, these themes did not necessarily emerge from logical and coherent sets of statements. In fact, many statements seemed on the surface to be rather like those Seiter found: off topic, irrelevant and illogical. It is only in viewing the interview and the interview *experience*, including meanings that emerge as part of the research relationship, as a whole, could the material be understood as having any sort of patterning or theme.

Free Association is a method that is designed to accommodate the illogical. Freud's concept 'free association' was designed to overcome problems associated with accuracy and the recall of events in analysis (Freud, 1900/ 1991; Freeman, 1989). As a method free association is able to counteract the claim that the unconscious could not be observed. Freud's epistemological claim is that free association provides a link between the conscious and dynamic unconscious worlds. It prevents the process of interpretation being arbitrary because free associations are never completely 'free' (Freeman, 1989; Bollas, 2002). In the clinical setting the patient starts with a thought, such as a dream fragment, a memory or whatever thought comes to mind. The patient is then encouraged to give voice to any subsequent thoughts which enter the mind. This can be words, numbers, images or any kind of idea. Free association informs the research design as FANI uses a particular form of open questioning to facilitate the production of narratives (see below) and other potentially fruitful trains of thought that can elucidate thematic 'wholes'. The standard question and answer format associated with interviewing relies on 'why' questions (Mishler, 1986). 'Why' questions however, close down potentially fruitful avenues as they force interviewees to intellectualise, which can also be used defensively to allay unconscious anxiety. 'Why' questions also force information in to the straitjacket of the topic by making information 'fit'.

Free association can help the interviewer make sense of material that is 'riotously anticontextual' (Bollas, 1995:12), because the nature of the unconscious is such that seemingly opposing ideas and images easily co-exist. The unconscious ignores time for instance, as moments from early childhood are represented alongside contemporary events. So, some basic biographical questions concerning family of origin are incorporated at the start of the interview. I asked interviewees to tell me

about family, where they grew up and went to school. Questions included; Can you tell me about your family? Can you tell me about where you grew up and the schools you have attended? I would also ask a question about their current life and employment. These questions obviously provide biographical context and also a sense of social trajectories, such as moving from a working-class family background into middle-class professional employment. I used this to try to acknowledge the idea of unique biographies and the importance of childhood experience. In the spirit of free association the interviewer is open to randomness, irrationality and material, which does not fit. This is based on the assumption that the material, if it is part of a meaning frame or a significant unconscious process, is not truly random.

I asked a question about general viewing likes and dislikes, helping to formulate a sense of general tastes. Then I asked them to tell me about any film or programme, scene or character they wanted to talk about, again selecting "tell me about...." requests with the aim of generating narratives. For instance, I found in my first pilot study that I slipped into asking 'why' questions about favourite movies. This resulted in answers such as 'well-acted' or 'good script' which told me nothing about the emotional significance of the film. As the data chapters demonstrate, open questions were successful as a range of narratives covering emotional responses to the texts, viewing stories and biographical narratives were generated in response to the text.

For Bollas, free association is an ongoing, everyday process not confined to the clinical setting and is a form of self-expression between conscious and unconscious thought and these contain 'psychic truths' so processes of free association are necessary for emotional health (2002:5). At the same time, free associations can serve defensive functions as they may be part of the subject's efforts to avoid anxiety (2002:10). Freud thought that the original idea that a clinical session started with (translated to favourite texts for instance in this case) was important as it prevented 'irrelevant' material emerging (Freeman, 1989). The open question and narrative generating method clearly facilitates forms of free association as interviewees often said, "I don't know why I thought of this but I must tell you...." or "this is nothing to do with the film but this just came to mind". The information formed a link between the text and something that was emotionally significant for the viewer. I would bring the interview to a close by asking if there was anything else the interviewee wished to talk about.

The interviews in this study were designed with only a small set of questions in mind to start the ball rolling. The answers were followed up following the interviewee's logic rather than some overall research agenda. During the interview I attempted to follow the interviewee's ordering of events. I allowed the interviewee's film/programmes to set the agenda whilst allowing the interviewee to discuss anything that came to mind. Second interviews were structured differently as the questions I asked were based on eliciting more information about the affective and emotional significance of narratives and texts discussed in the first interview. Other methods were also used such as watching significant clips with interviewees (see Sophie, Chapter Five).

The aim of the interview is to generate narratives. As described, psychoanalytically informed research also pays attention to biography and personal dynamics. It has been argued that narratives play an important role in identity formation and they are meaning frames that help organise action and make experience meaningful (McLeod, 1997; Schafer, 1981; Spence, 1982). In hermeneutic and life history approaches this analysis often takes a developmental form organising experience around past, present and future. However sense-making is never purely rational as the work of narratives has unconscious features. Their presentation, form and structure can be viewed as vehicles through which the unconscious and emotional concerns can unknowingly and unwittingly emerge. In practical terms this makes the request "Can you tell me about ..." a productive request as it allows the interviewee to discuss particular incidents that have emotional significance without requesting the interviewee to consciously express this.

What kind of evidence do narratives provide then? Free Association as a method used by Freud presumes that the stories told to the researcher express conscious and unconscious meaning. Narratives are specific instances of events that have emotional significance for the speaker. As I have noted, if one asks, "Why do you like this film?" This predisposes an answer that intellectualises the reply. Once I substituted requests to "Tell me about..." for "Why do you like..." I found a range of significant emotional and biographical narratives were generated. Narrative theories found in humanities and social sciences point to discursive identity work done through storytelling, which is a form of social and interpersonal action. According to Polikinghorne (1995) narratives are used to draw events together, to give them temporal unity and this occurs in the interaction between two people but there is a degree of 'artificial fabrication' to narratives that is not apparent in everyday conversation (Toolan 1988). Discursive psychologists such as Harre (1994) point to the way social identity is 'performed' through talk. FANI limitations also 'inhere in the way that this method depends on an individual's narrative, based in language. This means that it may only partially bring out unconscious intersubjectivity, being most likely to miss how this works through embodied communication' (Hollway, 2008b:11). I want to argue that in audience research it is possible to triangulate free association and narrative with a number of forms of 'evidence' such as textual analysis, history and researcher responses and subjectivity.

Sociological approaches have dominated empirical audience research and often the text has been relegated. I want to argue that a 'preferred' reading of a text is useful as it provides a point from which where interviewees' interpretations can be compared. This can then be linked to biographical and narrative information from the interview data. I also used fan websites to explore common responses and compare these with those of my interviewees. For instance, Sophie (Chapter Five) finds a scene in *Castaway* very distressing and my reading of this scene was that her emotion was in excess of what would realistically be generated by the events on screen. By using the 'Rate It' website, popular with people of Sophie's age, I was able to confirm that her response was not typical. Biographical information was set against the back-drop of historical and social change to which particular narratives,

texts and viewings corresponded, as the data chapters show. The methods adopted for this research, principally Free Association Narrative Interviewing, triangulated with other methods such as biographical, textual and socio-historical analysis can be used practically to illustrate the insufficiency of some approaches to audience research, such as those choosing to focus exclusively on linguistic or social power in addressing the particular domain of objects (people and 'things') in and around film and television. My assertion is that a *combination* of psychoanalytic, social, and cultural studies methods offers a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of subjectivity and lived experience in relation to viewing.

3.4 Unconscious communication and researcher subjectivity

I have discussed the limitations of research which only draws on linguistic approaches and does not acknowledge the dynamic processes between outer and inner worlds, or the effect of the subject's unique biographical experiences from the past and how they impact on the present and vice versa. This section explores evidence of the unconscious, focussing in particular on how the researcher's subjectivity can be used as a resource.

The unconscious is not tangible and cannot be observed as a concrete entity. Instead it is visible in the everyday, which Freud (1901/2001) referred to as the 'psychopathology of everyday life' and can be observed through emotions, affective states, dreams, fantasies, parapraxes and even jokes. There are also unspoken aspects to unconscious experience, embodied knowledge and ways of being that escape articulation in language but exist as the 'idiom' and 'character' of the individual (Bollas, 1992, 1995). Psychoanalysis therefore offers a critique of positivist research methods and sociological approaches that are unable to capture the complexity of human experience, emotion, meaning, context and relations with others.

Positivist research assumes a cognitive, mostly rational individual whose sensory responses are reliable and under the control of the subject. Subjects are conscious of their actions and responses in a research situation. Social media research is alert to the constraints placed by discourse and social power on the individual but stops short of discussing unconscious motivation. In most qualitative interview-based research, however, it is presumed that what the subject tells the researcher is largely truthful, transparent and coherent (Walkerdine et al, 2001; Hollway, 2003). The researcher on the other hand is positioned as one who is able to maintain 'distance', which is associated with objectivity. The researcher is considered able to interpret the data accurately with no consideration of the subjectivity, including unconscious internal processes, of either party. On the other hand subjectivity is examined as a position and something 'constructed' in social discourse. This ignores the inter-personal dynamics of the relationship between researcher and researched. Where this work does acknowledge the relationship this tends to be thought of in linguistic terms and as a co-construction between the two parties. Psychoanalysis is able to offer reasons why interviewees might not tell factually truthful, coherent or realistic stories and, as I will explore below, it is possible to utilise methods that are

able to offer reasons for this. For instance, Chapter Four will show a number of examples where factual inaccuracies, rather than being discounted, are understood as parapraxes or 'slips' associated with interviewees' emotional concerns which drive the interview agenda, but in a far from coherent and logical way. For instance, Sue remembers two films being about siblings, when in fact they were about cousins. This is significant biographically as the case study illustrates. If both researcher and researched have a unique biography and set of internal object relations which impact on the way reality is experienced and if defences such as splitting, denial and projection are mobilised, then this makes the idea of a calm, controlled, objective research situation seem much less stable and open to control (Walkerdine, 1986). Social differences are important as they impact on the relationship between researcher and the 'object of knowledge', as feminist critics have shown, but 'people are not *determined* by them (Hollway, 2003:2). This will be clarified in the case study discussed in 3.5.

Hunt (1989), Walkerdine (1986, 1997) and Hollway and Jefferson (1997) have been instrumental in encouraging serious engagement with the idea of researcher subjectivity as a resource to facilitate knowledge. This builds on important critical ideas concerning research and power from feminism. For Hunt, the researcher's self is a 'primary instrument of inquiry'. As described in Chapter Two, media and communication studies have extensively theorised models of communication, but no model or concept exists to address unconscious communication between texts, audiences and researchers. Schore (2003) collates a vast amount of evidence from empirical work in neuroscience, psychobiology and neuropsychanalysis to show that it is now accepted that degrees of unconscious communication are present in all our interactions with other subjects and processes such as transference and projection are not restricted to the therapy situation. It follows, therefore, that intersubjective and emotional experiences are implicit in research gathering, and a model for understanding unconscious communication is needed in the case of interview work. It would be rare to find a communication or media studies textbook that along with sender-receiver models for example, also offered an account of unconscious communication, but clearly one is needed.

Klein's (1946) view of projective identification is significant. In Klein's view projective identification represents an inherently aggressive object relationship, as it is concerned with the evacuation and placing of malevolent impulses and feelings into another object to 'control' it. Significantly this then induces feeling states in the recipient 'that are congruent with the ejected feelings' (Ogden, 1990:25) and the 'receiver' can come to know how the unconscious phantasies of the 'transmitter' *feel* (Schore, 2003:59).

Bion's (1962) 'container-contained' model represents a sophisticated post-kleinian account of the emotional and intersubjective dynamics of communication. Bion's argument is based on his container-contained model, where the child uses a more benign form of projective identification than that described by Klein, and it is also an intersubjective model for understanding communication and experience. The child 'learns from experience' as it projects difficult feelings and sensations into the mother who is able to contain and mollify these feelings and return them to the

child in a form that can be tolerated (Segal, 1992:122). The mother initially learns to 'attune' herself to the child and eventually they both learn to adapt and respond to the other's emotional state. Schore (2003) working in neuroscience has argued that scientific evidence exists to support the idea that projective identification can be viewed as a basic building block for a theory of communication based on intersubjectivity and experience. From these early emotional experiences the child deduces: 'the models and concepts he will use as hypotheses in his contact with internal and external reality' (Grinberg, 1993:100). 'Knowing' is the activity through which the subject becomes 'aware of the emotional experience and can abstract from it a formulation that represents this experience in a relatively adequate way' (Grindberg et al, 1993:100). These abstracted elements are used in processes of understanding the other subject or part of the self. The idea that communication should be understood as something 'emotional', encompassing unconscious and intersubjective features, (Bion 1962; Schore 2003) has radical political potential and can, as I will demonstrate in relation to the audience case study (3.5), enhance our understanding of the experience of power.

Freud argued that his responses, and thoughts and feelings, were resources and responses to the analysand's and his own unconscious. This communication was also understood through the concepts of transference, countertransference and projection. Traditionally these concepts were associated with the clinical setting, where feelings associated with significant figures from the client's past are transferred onto the analyst. As Schore (2003) and others (Andersen and Berk, 1998) argue, this view has been developed and expanded and it is now commonly recognised that these concepts are not confined or unique to the clinical setting. Transferences are unconscious processes and refer to the ways in which the inner world of 'psychic reality' helps to 'shape and give meaning to the intersubjective, social and cultural worlds we inhabit' (Chodorow 1995:14). Christopher Bollas (1995, 1992, 1987) has been instrumental in showing how this process works with specific reference to the feelings and responses we particular situations, people, and 'things', like texts for instance, as described in 2.4. Countertransference refers to what happens in the analyst unconsciously in response to that which has been transferred by the patient, and Bion (1962) would also point to what the analyst then does with this material. Freud said (1915:194) 'it is a remarkable thing that the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another without passing through the conscious'.

The concepts of transference and countertransference have been used to help researchers understand the feelings generated in response to interviewees (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Doubts, however, have been expressed about the use of the concepts outside of the clinical situation. In particular the idea of countertransference is viewed with suspicion where unrecognised transferences emergent from the researcher's unconscious desires and anxieties are mistakenly used in interpretation of interviewee responses (Baraitser and Frosh, 2008). Despite this there is widespread agreement amongst clinicians that transference is not restricted to the clinical setting (Schore, 2003). Based on empirical research, Andersen and Berk (1998) argue that transference is an 'everyday phenomenon'

(1998) present in 'everyday social relations', is 'non-pathological' and occurs both inside and outside the consulting room (1998:81). For Chodorow, it is the capacities of transference, projection, introjection and unconscious fantasy that allow us to create personal meaning. In transference we 'endow, animate and tint, emotionally and through fantasy, the cultural, linguistic, interpersonal, cognitive and embodied word we experience' (1999:14-15). Transference is also associated with time and memory as 'we use experiences and feelings from the past to give partial meaning to the present as well as to shape the present, as we act and interpret present experience in the light of this internal past. At the same time ... through transference our current unconscious feelings and fantasies – contemporary psychic reality, whatever its temporal origins - give partial meaning to and shape conscious feeling and experience' (1999:14-15). This will be developed further in data analysis chapters in relation to the concept of afterwardsness.

Chodorow goes on to argue that transference may express unconscious fantasy and feelings but this works through processes of projection and introjection, endowing or shaping both internal and external objects. Unconscious communication is a two-way process. Omnipotent defences (discussed below) would be examples of something inhibiting unconscious communication. However, if one is open to acknowledging their responses and tolerating difficult feelings, as Bion (1962) proposes, it is possible to work with unconscious forms of communication productively.

Freeman argues Freud recognised his feelings, thoughts, fantasies and dreams were complex forms of communication with his patients. Freud was also well aware of the 'tricks' the self could play but also how his responses and involvement in cases were also skills which enabled him to make sense of what a patient presented to him: 'Far from necessarily prejudicing the interpretive process (prejudice being taken pejoratively), these skills and qualities referred to can be employed in the service of facilitating it' (1989:307). The researcher's mental experience, thought of as containing both psychic and social parts, 'mediates their understanding of the cultural and psychological world of subjects' (Hunt, 1989:13). So, in practical terms, researchers should keep a research diary or set of notes that records thoughts, feelings, emotional responses and fantasies. Chapters Four, Five and Six provide detailed examples of the way I used my responses in data production and interpretation. These chapters show how thoughts and feelings associated with the research experience can be used as evidence and triangulated with other forms of evidence, such as biographical details or parapraxes present in the research data.

An important part of the data analysis began as soon as the interviews finished and this involved working with my subjectivity. I would immediately begin making detailed notes of my responses. Any thought or impression that came into my head would be noted in my research journal. I would then spend the next two or three days carrying my notebook around and any memory or thought that came to mind about the interviews would be noted. I listened to the interviews two or three times over the next few days. I would also take headphones out with me and listen to the interviews in different places again noting responses and thoughts. This would

continue throughout the transcribing process. Once I had a written transcript I would again read the transcript and note responses. Throughout the early part of the process I did not attempt to interpret or analyse the data. I focussed on opening myself up to the data and my responses.

Second interviews took place about two weeks later. After listening to the first interview on numerous occasions I would prepare for the second interview by asking questions which related to information given in the first interview. I would explain to the interviewees that I wanted to ask them questions based on what they had said in the first interview and I would attempt to find out more about particular texts. The kinds of questions in the second interview were based on a format "Last time you mentioned x could you tell me a bit more about this....?" Also, I would ask if there were any texts or viewing memories that they had not discussed but that they wished to. I adopted the same policy of intensive listening and response recording following the interviews.

I adopted this policy when I began formal data analysis. I began reading and listening again and reading my journal. I did not look for patterns or concepts. My initial aim was to understand each interviewee and their texts and viewing. I opened myself to the material and lived with it, concentrating on one interviewee at a time. This was particularly useful and produced a range of interesting responses. For instance, when working on Sophie's data I found myself at a car boot sale and realised I was holding a *Beanie Bear* (see Chapter Five) and stroking it and feeling how lovely it was. I realised that this was a response to Sophie's data as I was able to identify with her, which suggested she had been able to communicate her experience to me and that I was able to respond to it and, in part live it, recognising that it was not my own experience.

Chapter Six also contains a detailed account of my particularly visual responses to Bill and how I worked with them. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) adopt the term 'defended subject' to describe defences such as splitting, projection, projective identification, and denial that might be adopted in research situations to manage unconscious anxiety. Defences may manifest as 'rational' behaviours such as intellectualisation on the part of the interviewee or interviewer or possibly both. This can be seen and is examined in Chapter Six in the cases of Chris and Bill. Denial, for example, may manifest as a form of objective detachment from thoughts and feelings in the researcher. It is possible to design a method acknowledging subjectivity in both parties *psycho-socially*. This can allow the researcher to relinquish omnipotence whilst still producing valid data, able to acknowledge the way reality and knowledge can be distorted, displaced and inaccessible, and so offers a more nuanced and critically realistic approach to communication. Such a method necessarily depends on listening to what is said and self-awareness of thoughts and feelings. Although I did not have formal counselling supervision, I have some experience in counselling and working with my own responses gained in training as a psychiatric nurse in the past. Part of the ethical approach to research involves acknowledging and attempting to understand difficult thoughts and feelings. This can be understood through the psychoanalytic approach to omnipotence.

3.5 Omnipotence and knowledge: exploring 'troublesome' audience research

Winnicott (1971) and Bion (1962) have suggested that omnipotent thought must be relinquished if reality is to be objectively perceived. For Bion, all experience falls into three groups of emotion: Love (L), Hate (H) and Knowledge (K) known as 'links'. Link describes the emotional experience present 'when two people or two parts of a person are related to each other'. K is particularly relevant to the research situation as it dominates where there is a 'subject that tries to know an object and an object that can be known' (Grindberg et al, 1993:99). The K link has a particular 'shade' of its own and is characterised by painful feelings of frustration inherent in the subject's ability to 'know anything'. For knowledge acquisition the subject must learn to tolerate doubt.

Seiter (1990) (discussed below) acknowledges that power and difference can hinder communication because it 'may inhibit researchers from asking appropriate questions or listening to answers' (Johnson et al, 2004) and can produce mis-readings of data or make interpretation impossible, as Seiter found. Whilst contemporary critical thought on the research process has stressed difference and power, dialogue, and context, psychoanalytic thought enhances this by showing that it is also necessary to acknowledge that dialogue and communication are also both inevitable and necessary with internal 'others' and 'fragments of the self' (Johnson et al, 2004:58). As it is impossible to bracket social positioning and the power it may confer, it follows it is also impossible to jettison the unconscious and subjective aspects of knowledge acquisition. I will explore this in the case of Seiter's research below.

In the container-contained model, knowledge *acquisition* results from the modification of pain in the K link. The knowledge the child attains is built upon and used for further discoveries. However, knowledge *possession* can also be used to avoid pain and frustration. This is associated with the omnipotent parts of the personality. There is a negative instance of the K link, minus K (-K) where the container-contained model is reversed 'where meaning and emotion are actively denuded of vitality and sense so that discovery and development become impossible' (Grindberg et al, 1993:100). This can be seen by examining a case-study of a piece of audience research where knowledge acquisition became problematic for the researchers. I suggest that Bion's (1962) theories help to make sense of processes that were happening in this particular interview in a piece of research on soap opera respondents.

Ellen Seiter and Hans Borchers (1990) are respected audience researchers who were conducting a study of soap opera audiences. This study illustrates some of the limitations of 'social' and cultural power interpretations in audience research. This is a particularly useful study not only because of its typicality but because it discusses 'difficult feelings' and the researchers perceived 'failure' to produce data. The researchers presumed they had learnt nothing about their topic of soap operas. There are few studies in media research which allow an evaluation of

psychoanalytically informed, against traditional, approaches. Seiter's article is particularly useful as it contains a transcript of the interview in question.

The researchers arranged an interview with two male retired housemates who had responded to an advert placed in a local newspaper recruiting interviewees who watch soaps. The researchers were forced to acknowledge the presence of strong emotional reactions of 'annoyance', 'antagonism' and 'irritation' towards the interviewees. They recognised these feelings were associated with the failure to generate usable data. In fact they struggled to make sense of data that 'just did not fit'.

Arriving for the interview they were angry when the men began by claiming they neither viewed nor liked soaps despite responding to their advert. In fact they discussed a range of topics that the researchers identified as being about self-acquired knowledge. They also told the researchers many seemingly irrelevant and unconnected memories and biographical stories. In the end the researchers concluded the interview had been a 'waste of time' and that they had learnt nothing about soap audiences and that their interviewees were 'crackpots'. Ultimately the researchers produced a piece of writing which discussed the differences in social power between the working-class men and the academics (one who was female) and argued in a limited way that the differences in power between them worked against knowledge production. In effect it stopped them communicating. I approached the material psycho-socially and disagreed with this.

When social or cultural empirical research is presented it is commonplace to find some form of a statement about the social categories of the researcher, for instance, white, female and middle class. The reader is supposed to be able to make a reasonably accurate appraisal about the way in which this impinges on the research design and knowledge produced. This is perhaps a caricature but it points to the way some of the criticisms of objectivity from feminism and a range of social construction approaches have permeated intellectual thought. Olsen quotes Holland who argues that as far as certainty and knowledge claims go, methods are limited. Researchers can only 'explain the grounds on which the decision making which produces the interpretation and the logic of the method on which these decisions are based' (2000:230). Subjectivity, like objectivity, can be explained as a cognitive process and 'managed'. I have criticised this position previously.

Seiter (1990) acknowledged that awareness of social differences meant that she was *often* troubled by difficult feelings generated for her in this and other interviews. She explains that she realised that her attachments to her feminist political perspectives on gender and class led her to focus on *social* factors at the expense of exploring what her strong feelings might mean. Clearly, the process of knowledge acquisition was generating anxiety. To counter this, the researchers designed an unstructured interview which would take cues from 'digressions' and be receptive to 'unanticipated areas of discussion, with the 'psychoanalytic scenario in the back of our minds' (Seiter, 1990).

Psychoanalysis has a fundamental aim to explain 'why we feel deeply about certain things, certain experiences and people' (Chodorow, 1993:3). For Hunt (1989), the presence of strong negative feelings in a research situation indicates unconscious defences against anxiety. Seiter realised that the strong feelings she had could not be explained fully by the social-cultural model she uses. Despite this, she then omits discussion of psychoanalysis in favour of the assertion 'cultural studies must focus on the differences in class and cultural capital' as it is the social processes that 'characterise the relationship between the academic and the subject of audience studies' (Seiter, 1990:61). Seiter concludes that strong feelings can only be understood as symptomatic of issues of power resulting from hierarchies of class and gender. It is these hierarchies that work against the production of knowledge. Seiter and Borchers's self-critique is limited to an assertion that the class and educational differences between the researchers and interviewees produced the antagonism. Bion's ideas can help to make sense of the processes that were happening in the interview.

Seiter and Borchers tried to possess and control knowledge rather than acquire it by being open to the emotional and subjective aspects of the experience and this helps explain Seiter's frustration and anger toward her interviewees. This interview demonstrates psycho-social processes, however. Seiter identified the themes of learning and knowledge present in the data, and I think accurately interpreted this in relation to questions of power and social hierarchies. There are significant differences that cannot be ignored between academic researchers socialised in legitimate culture and the working-class men whose knowledge was self-acquired. Here is an example of the unconscious anxiety provoking aspects of Bourdieu's theory of distinction. As discussed earlier, there are other considerations involved in research that are present, if unconsciously, in the interview situation. Given the reality of economic and time constraints placed on academics, and the pressure to produce publishable research, it is likely this made the interview situation anxiety-provoking for the researchers. The nature of academic research production I would argue creates the grounds for omnipotent thought and predisposes researchers to approach knowledge production through -K, negating the 'emotional' components of research.

Also, there are questions around investment in the established theoretical positions that the researchers brought to the interview. McGuigan (1992) explored the 'active' and 'resistant' positions on the audience that have been prominent in cultural and media studies. In television studies this took the form of a shift towards *active* audience and 'pleasure' found in fan and soap opera studies (McGuigan, 1992). He argues that popular readings are 'applauded with no evident reservations at all, never countenancing the possibility that a popular reading could ever be anything other than 'progressive' (1992:72). McGuigan's work does a disservice to the political commitment of theorists of popular culture who aim to understand the workings of dominant power. However, his book does raise some thorny questions about the investment of some academics in particular discourses and forms of knowledge (1992:4). Similarly, survival can be mistaken for forms of resistance. The rejection of Frankfurt school perspectives, for example, was based on suspicion of

any perspective that seemed to 'pathologise' the audience. Psychoanalysis deals with the conflictual nature of experience and the 'pathology' of everyday life, the fact of disappointment and pain (Craib, 1989) common to all in varying forms. Clearly this conflicts with the former model and contains strands of thought, which might on the surface, suggest 'passivity' or lack of agency.

Seiter and Borchers' adherence to particular social and cultural models, as they acknowledge, finds them in a rather strange position in relation to their interviewees, which can be explored through the psychoanalytic model they reject. There is a degree of splitting present in the article in relation to 'knowledge', which also corresponds to social power, as Seiter notes. 'Self-taught' knowledge, which the interviewees wanted to display, was the source of much irritation for the researchers. 'Mr H was trying to display his knowledge about a topic he (erroneously) assumed we would be interested in We were more receptive to Mr D when he returned to the topic of soap operas' (1990:63).

The researchers were irritated because, unlike other interviewees who were soap 'literate', these men 'couldn't even reproduce critical categories common to the *TV Guide*'. This illustrates a point made previously that within Cultural Studies there has long been a celebration of inverse forms of cultural capital based on oppositional, bottom-up knowledge generated by fan cultures. Walkerdine and Blackman (2001) have critiqued this trend, arguing some academics approach to research is often structured by fantasies about the working class, particularly concerning 'resistance' and oppositional forms of interpretation. Had the interviewees been 'soap literate', the researchers' responses towards the men may have been more positive as this demonstrated forms of oppositional knowledge. The way in which the researchers begin to question their investments in particular perspectives makes an important contribution to methodology in audience research however.

The researchers were faced with feelings of pain, frustration and threats to forms of omnipotence associated with the need to produce knowledge. This predisposed the situation to one of knowledge *possession* rather than knowledge *acquisition* as described by Bion. There were only certain types of knowledge the researchers wanted to know about. This indicated the presence of -K link where the interviewees' experiences were internalised in a way that 'strips and denudes of meaning' (Hinshelwood, 1991:299). The interviewees presented the researchers with personal experiences and thoughts that 'got in the way' of the knowledge they were interested in. They spoke about this consciously as they expressed their annoyance that the men wanted to talk about their interests and significant biographical events. This was the information that 'didn't fit'. Here, the experiences the men projected to communicate with the researchers were rejected and stripped of their meaning. For Hinshelwood, this instance of -K is 'one version of a harsh super ego' seen in the 'denigrating' of the object (1991:299) as the interviewees are labelled as 'crackpots' (Seiter, 1990:65).

Clearly, this interview was overflowing with seemingly irrational, powerful and conflictual feelings, accompanied by sustained efforts by the researchers to bracket

and control such feelings in both parties. I will now describe an approach to method that would enable researchers to see these difficult feelings as a resource rather than a problem.

Examining the transcript, whilst noting the emotional tone and affect, it is possible to make sense of the interview. There is evidence that the interviewees identify with characters and narratives in the soaps and this was symptomatic of the internal conflicts associated with ageing. This also emerged out of the *circulation* of difficult feelings between both parties. It was clear that both parties struggled with difficult feelings. There are a series of projections around 'knowledge' between the parties that are shaped by fantasies and fears about the other. Confronted with the negative feelings of the researchers, Mr D and Mr H refuse a dependent stance and the idea of self-acquired knowledge represents this. Layton (2002) describes the refusal of dependency as a form of splitting. 'Normative unconscious processes' are associated with social hierarchies under capitalism and operate through binary oppositions supported in discourse, for instance, autonomy is valued and dependency is denigrated. This is achieved and maintained initially in families through defensive processes which generate feelings of fear of loss of love and acceptance in the other, usually the child (Layton 2002). This then continues into adult life but is heightened in the ageing process, as dependency and lack of autonomy become reality for many older people. Instead, in this interview the men promote their autonomy through discourses of self-learning, choosing the terrain of knowledge because of the anxieties emergent from the power differences that Seiter rightly notes. The men adopt processes that seek to undermine researcher authority, but at the same time the researchers 'confirm' their intellectual superiority by labelling the men as 'crackpots'.

What can be learnt about audiences and the genre of soap opera by examining these intersubjective processes? Mr H told a story about 'anger' towards the television 'box'. The story concerned Elvis Presley who allegedly fired a shotgun at a television, as he was so angry at the programme. It was this story that prompted the researchers to conclude the men were 'crackpots'. This illustrates on one level an extreme case of the transitional functioning of television and its ability to withstand abuse (Silverstone, 1994). However, in the light of the difficult unconscious dynamics of the interview it is likely that that the frustration and anxiety Mr H was feeling towards the researchers, which in turn was a response to *their* feelings of frustration and anger, was represented through this story, the television representing the researchers. It represents his unconscious phantasy of what he unconsciously would like to do to the researchers and others like them. This also poses some interesting questions about the way the television set, and particular texts can become used in projections between viewers and researchers. This kind of exchange, structured as it was by the category of 'knowledge', illustrates the idea I developed in Chapter Two; that cultural capital is a painful, lived experience which generates unconscious anxiety and phantasy responses. If Seiter and Borchers had been able to work with the uncomfortable dynamics of the research situation informed by the 'psycho-analytic scenario' they chose to bracket, they would ultimately have enhanced their knowledge of the social process and the effects of 'power' they stated as their central aim.

Standard research practice in the social sciences promotes empathy as essential for developing effective research relationships. It is often unclear what empathy means. Psychoanalysis would point to unconscious processes and uncomfortable intersubjective dynamics such as those illustrated above that prevent one person hearing or understanding what the other has to say. Bion understands empathy as a product of communication that is based on projective processes between people and forms of omnipotence can obstruct this. It is only when omnipotence is relinquished that the self can be open to receiving projections from the other and vice versa, and this is the basis for empathy which is thought necessary to constitute 'good' practice in qualitative interviewing.

The researchers were angry with the men for sharing memories and life stories. Researcher omnipotence and authority was threatened by the presumption on the part of the interviewees that the researchers and the men were interested in the same things. It is often assumed interviewees 'give' and researchers 'take'. These men wanted something from the interviews that was different to the aims of the interviewers. The attempt to deny interviewees' attachments worked against empathy and also hampered the collection of biographical information which they wanted to share that could further inform their analysis.

Seiter does not propose any theories of viewing or genre based on the interview, but I would argue that taking the interview as a whole suggests a number of reasons why soap operas are significant for the men. Despite displaying a dislike and antagonism towards soaps, on reading the transcript it is apparent that the interviewees did in fact watch numerous soaps. Far from being television illiterate, they were able to comment on narrative, plot lines, characterisation, the difference between daytime and evening soaps. It is true to say their opinion sometimes appeared 'sexist' and did not conform to the 'pleasures of soaps' models found in some fan literature. Occasionally the men indicated an ambivalent approach to soap viewing. However, it is still useful to see the interview as an example of the way objects, or in this case a genre, can be used as containers for self-states and projections (Bollas, 1987, 1992). Selves can be *dis-attached* to certain objects (Redman and Whitehouse-Hart, 2008) and attachments are not always pleasurable. As Mr D says, with reference to soap operas and echoing a theme found in this research, 'instead of trying to make you feel better they make you feel worse' (Seiter, 1990: 73). As this research shows, things viewers find difficult are often as revealing as those that are pleasurable. These men were clearly returning to a genre that generated difficult feelings for them.

From the transcript it was apparent that the settings, narratives and characters discussed in the interview triggered chains of associations that took the men back to painful and difficult experiences and relationships in the past. In turn, these highlighted present distressing realisations associated with ageing. It is impossible to understand this interview without recognising the significance of age, but age viewed psycho-socially. As younger, employed men they would not have been in the position to watch so much television. The very act of viewing makes reference to their increasing age and change of circumstances. Mr D tells a story about

suffering a heart attack and having to go to hospital. He tells the researchers about the way he kept thinking about *General Hospital* and how it all became 'real' as he was 'playing the part of a very sick man'. For Bollas, this would indicate the subject was open to being 'played' by the object (1992, 1995).

For those wanting to find traditional psychoanalytic themes in the 'text', Mr D and Mr H summarise soaps in a language that indicated the unconscious is found in characters who are full of 'hate, envy and jealousy' (Seiter, 1990: 72), but this is too narrow. Soaps focus on a number of themes, which also appear in this research: relationships, families and inter-generational issues. For these men, whose age appears to have confronted them with the reality of failed and difficult relationships, soaps have been able to offer a space through which these issues can be addressed in keeping with the idea of repetition scenario, where conflicts are revisited with the aim of finding forms of resolution and change. The men have now to some extent been 'feminised' by their changed circumstances. This compounds the anxieties generated around dependency which Layton associates with a projection of fear and hatred towards 'others' such as women and black people (Layton, 2002), which they would not have been exposed to in earlier life as white working males. For these reasons psychoanalytic perspectives enhance media research on 'feminised' viewing. If analysis also reveals the 'work' that might be taking place for these men, in particular around mourning and ageing this would bring into relief forms of afterwardsness and the to and fro relationship between the past in the present and the present on the past that caused such frustrating fluctuations in the interview.

At the end of the interview we learn that 'knowledge' and soap opera has personal connotations because soaps are concerned with emotional knowledge and literacy. Mr H says:

[] I do resent the point that they seem to be so intent on. In most soap operas dealing with juveniles and juvenile problems [] and it is always, always, the parents who come out looking bad. It is always the parents' fault []. All the father's fault. Father never knows anything. He's a boob - an idiot. But the kids always come out looking perfect. No fault can be found with them. Only the parents.

Mr D expresses similar feelings when he says: "That's my theme song. I know what it's like to be young but you don't know what it's like to be old". They both agree and sum up these difficult feelings by placing them into an *object*: "Orson Wells made a very well known song a 45 with that title²⁰" which they want to "send" their "kids".

Lopate, as far back as 1977, acknowledged the 'feel' of daytime television and soaps. She was the first to correlate the rhythm of daytime programming and housework (Brunsdon, 2000). Like the concepts of flow and structure of feeling elaborated by Williams, Lopate picks up on a mood and a sensibility which points 'to the expansion

²⁰ I know what it's like to be young but you don't know what it's like to be old

of narrative time, which allows narrative (real life) interruption but also has specific emotional consequences'. Brunsdon quotes Lopate: 'Everyday life, which often includes boredom and restlessness when taken in its own time, becomes filled with poignancy when the moment can be languished upon' (2000:56).

Lopate recognised that dealing with personal problems is an important form of emotional work and the devaluation of this as 'women's work' was problematic. Soaps have a mood and rhythm relating to issues around attachment, family, life change and affect, which make them particularly useful for the work of mourning in the latter stages of life. Attachments to soaps can be better understood through the adoption of psycho-social perspectives on both the text and the audience. I want to move from theory to a practical discussion of the design.

3.6 Sample

The sample consisted of three men and three women: Sue, Mary, Sophie, Chris, Daniel and Bill. It has been argued that a small set of cases can be chosen to maximise social differences, or if this is not possible, any extrapolations must be confined to the limits of the sample (Hollway, 2004). I had already abandoned the idea of one film or television theory that fits all for reasons outlined in Chapter One. The sample was chosen as they represented a spread across the age and gender range of white working-class people, who have frequently been the subject of cultural studies and media research on audiences. This allowed for established territory to be revisited anew.

I recruited my sample, through a form of 'snowballing'. Each person interviewed was either someone I had met in a professional capacity through their work (e.g. as a librarian), or it was suggested I approach them through mutual friends or family, as they would potentially be willing to be interviewed. Those I met through their work offered to be interviewed when I explained what I was doing. This helped address issues of personal safety as I was working alone.

All the interviewees were working (or recently retired), some part-time and others full-time, in a range of occupations from care work, clerical and administration to professional employment in education. Methodologically, I utilised historical perspectives to understand individuals in relation to social change over time. In material and educational terms they have been subject to processes of social mobility associated with Britain in the late 20th Century. They are all homeowners and would be considered 'comfortable' in material terms. Bill, an Oxbridge educated teacher (see Chapter Six), was the only interviewee that would be considered firmly middle class. However, his journey began in a poor working class community and Bill, like Chris, had attended university and been subject to processes of social mobility. All the interviewees began their lives as traditionally working class, coming from families where parents were traditional manual labourers and where money was often 'tight'.

Age was also important. All the participants were over 25 and this was relevant as the research questions were interested in *relationships* with texts that had developed over time, as well as the impact of biography on 'interpretation'. It was decided that mature participants were more likely to have the kinds of relationships with texts and viewing that that the research wanted to explore. Small though the sample is the participants range across the life spectrum. Chris and Sophie being the youngest at 29 and 30, Mary 47, and Sue 43 are middle aged, Daniel was 36 at the time of the interview and Bill was in his 60s and retired.

Interviews took place in the participants' homes. This was important as settings are furnished through what Bollas (1992) calls expressions of the 'self'. He argues settings are important as they provide important information about the person which the researcher can use productively to inform interpretation. It was also important as my research explores the idea of home-viewing technology and viewing practices. Interviews were tape-recorded using a small Dictaphone. There were, then, 10 interviews and a series of letters with Bill. I had not planned to use letters specifically, but Bill had asked if we could correspond by letter as he was on the waiting list for a routine operation and did not want to cancel the interview. This is explored in Chapter Six. Each interview lasted for approximately two hours. Long interviews were preferred as a means of building a relationship with the research participants and as part of my method that used interviewer subjectivity as a resource, and this is discussed later.

3.7 Case studies

The research is based on a series of case studies. The research design emerged from the decision to select a small sample with the aim of depth rather than breadth. I was interested in experience and biography rather than patterning across cases which would require a much larger sample. However, as later chapters will show, important cross-case findings and conceptual developments were made. In-depth case studies were considered to be the most effective approach for a psychoanalytically informed phenomenological study of film and television viewing. This section will provide justification for small samples and their ability to produce valuable, relevant and reliable knowledge.

Individual case studies have been the preferred method for the presentation of clinical psychoanalytic data. As a social science research method, the case study has 'long been stereotyped as a weak sibling' (Yin, 1994:xiii). They are often accused of being purely descriptive, the detail is often too great, and theory and explanation become lost in the detail. But the most salient criticism applied to case study and small sample research concerns their inability to be replicated and generalised. The latter ambitions have dominated much positivist and qualitative research. Case studies and small sample research cannot be generalised *statistically* to 'populations or universes' (Yin, 1994), but can be used to generalise theoretically and conceptually (Dreher, 2000), as long as the researcher is aware of constraints. Rather than being based on statistics and probability, attention can be paid to 'the conditions under which the findings could be applicable in other situations'

(Hollway, 2004). We can 'make the case for theoretical, or conceptual extrapolation from case study data and also take care to specify what constraints may operate on it depending on the idea we are hoping to transfer as a result of location, social position and the like' (Patton in Hollway 2004:6).

Chapter Two discussed psychoanalytic theories and concepts that informed the research questions. I began by explaining some dissatisfaction with the dominance of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts in film research and I wanted to re-evaluate established approaches. Dreher argues for 'systematic' study of psychoanalytic concepts and promotes setting up empirical work which can explore the breadth and depth of established concepts. Outside the clinical situation concepts can be explored for their appropriateness to particular situations. Dreher also calls for the 'expansion' of *empirical* research projects, which explore the use of established concepts or assesses 'new and altered' concepts (2000:3), as I have attempted to do in this research.

I also borrowed ideas from grounded theory associated with the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967 see also Strauss and Corbin 1997). This approach rejects hypotheses and begins with a bracketing of assumptions about possible findings. Data are collected using a variety of methods and categories, concepts and frameworks are generated out of the data. I am sceptical about the possibility and value of this as the researcher's 'hunches' and questions are an important driving force for the research, and provided the researcher is prepared to relinquish ideas and change perspective in response to the data. I do not think it necessary to try to abandon all assumptions about possible findings. However, because I wanted to explore the possibility of using different concepts from psychoanalysis, I wanted to let the appropriate concept *emerge* from the data rather than having a set of concepts that I wanted to 'test'. So the concepts I have used to analyse the data were those that emerged as most appropriate when I began the process of intensive data analysis. This 'grounded theory' approach is not in conflict with Dreher's proposals for conceptual research. These methodological and conceptual themes will be examined in data analysis chapters and in the concluding chapter.

The data in each individual case study was analysed in depth. Long interviews, as Yin (1989), notes do generate a large amount of detailed data. It will be apparent that each case contains specific detail that is unique to the individual. However, I will demonstrate in the following chapters that this diverse detail (context, biographical experiences, position in family, occupation to name but a few) is relevant in each case in and of itself, but at the same time, it is the *detail* that allows for conceptual and theoretical generalisation beyond this study. This is in keeping with many critical realist approaches to research that are alert to the constraints placed upon research design and findings associated with differing contexts, social and cultural locations. The in-depth case study approach adopted demonstrates the rich potential of psychoanalytic concepts and theory for audience research and also the role of the researcher as an instrument of knowledge. Even in a small sample there were unexpected findings that help to re-think important ideas and generate future research projects, as later chapters will show: for instance, identification and

media texts, intergenerational identifications, the relationship between siblings and identification, media and trauma, ontological security and cultural capital as a psycho-social experience. However, I want also to hold onto the importance of the detail and context associated with each study.

3.8 Ethics

Each participant was given an A4 sheet detailing the research. Consent forms were supplied and signed with a copy given to each participant. Participants were given the option of withdrawing from the research at any point. Any topic or question they did not wish to answer would not be pursued. They were made aware on the consent form that I would use extracts from their data in my thesis and possible published work. I changed names²¹ and removed identifiable information about geographical locations and recognisable work places to protect identities. The Open University ethics committee gave further guidance and ethical clearance.²²

Psychoanalytically informed research is alert to the fact that interview situations may provoke anxiety, and this is true of potentially all interpersonal encounters. Established approaches to the ethics of qualitative research have been concerned with protecting the research subject from harm by identifying particular research topics as potentially harmful because they may cause emotional distress. Informed consent is established as one of the most important safeguards. However, as this research shows, it is never straightforward as a seemingly 'safe' topic such as favourite films and television programmes, or soap operas, as Seiter (1990) found, can provoke anxiety and emotion. As the research findings show, often texts are used for psychic work which addresses emotional difficulties. Viewing provokes strong feelings and this suggests that the idea of 'consent' in all research is problematic. Researchers can never fully anticipate what may occur in the research process and research subjects can never be fully informed or know what they are signing up for in advance. The prerogative to refuse to answer questions, continue with the interview or ultimately withdraw is, therefore, one of the most important aspects of care in the research situation.

Perspectives, outlined earlier, concerned with power differences between researcher and interviewee often assume that the research relationship is exploitative: the researcher 'takes' and the interviewee obtains nothing from the research. This is clearly a methodological consideration and was particularly important. For instance, it was difficult to leave Daniel's interviews, as he would have been happy to carry on talking all night. Bill wanted to continue to work with me and he wanted me to do a form of therapy, which I was not qualified to do. This is discussed in depth in Chapter Six and I demonstrate how I used my own experience of difficult and frustrating feelings of the kind experienced by Seiter to understand my research subject and his viewing.

²¹ Sophie is a pseudonym but the reader will see in chapter 5 that I make reference to her maiden surname. I have written permission to use this information.

²² July 2004

I have explained in detail above various practical ways researchers can use their subjectivity to inform their understanding of the research participants. As I have shown media studies has focussed particularly on the idea that the only interpretations that are 'safe' are those which explore and seek to challenge the power relations between researcher and researched. Hollway (2008b) notes that psychoanalytic interpretation is thought to be unsafe if it is outside of the analytic relationship, although there is widespread clinical agreement now that processes of unconscious communication are not confined or unique to the clinical setting (Schoore, 2003; Grant and Crawley 2002; Andersen and Berk 1998). Understanding unconscious processes and the way they impact on the researcher's perception of reality means that the researcher can assess what she experiences and whether this is a fair way of knowing participants (Hollway, 2008b:14).

Hollway argues that 'identification is a useful starting point for conceptualising ethical relating, which should involve recognising others for what they are and not for what you want or need them to be, nor for how they might want to be recognised' (2008b:14). Researchers can be alert to their responses and it is within human capacity for subjects to differentiate between what is our feeling and experience and what belongs to the other. So it is possible to learn from Sophie's love of soft toys by temporarily identifying and engaging in the experience, but it is equally possible to acknowledge that her tears when she views *Castaway* belong to her experience rather than anything created by the film text. Similarly, working with Bill involved me tolerating blind spots and difficult feelings of doubt and frustration. It is 'unprocessed, uncontained, intersubjective dynamics' that 'compromise objective knowing of reality' (Hollway, 2008b:16). It is for this reason that I have argued that responses are only one form of evidence and must be triangulated with the interview data, tapes, textual analysis, historical and biographical analysis and supervision.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced a number of themes, which appear in the following three chapters. I have argued the case for psycho-social approaches to audience research theoretically, as well as exploring the practical implications as they apply to this research. I have shown through evaluation of an established approach to audience research that it is possible to produce 'knowledge' from a single case or small sample when psycho-social perspectives are applied. This is an appropriate and ethically sound paradigm for conducting psychoanalytically informed empirical research. The following three chapters present the data beginning with the case studies of Sue and Mary.

CHAPTER FOUR

MOTHERS, SONS, SIBLINGS AND SUBJECTIVITY IN WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S VIEWING

Favourite texts are often revisited. Certain texts, or more specifically textual *moments*, become located in viewers' memories and the viewing memory, rather than the text, are returned to. These mnemonic textual moments are characterised first by 'aleatory' features, such as the element of surprise interpellation when the narrative halts for the viewer and they become engaged in processes of self-awareness, and second with an accompanying strong emotional response to the moment. This chapter explores what happens at these moments through evidence from the data which links such moments to identity in transition.

I will use pen portraits to introduce the interviewees Sue and Mary whose data I base this discussion on. There are demographic similarities between the two women: both in their mid to late forties, working class, married and mothers to sons. Both had their strongest emotional reactions to films that were viewed at home. Whilst each case is unique, providing idiosyncratic findings, important conceptual themes emerge which connect these cases together and proffer ways of understanding the viewing experience and relationship with texts. Following the pen portraits, I will examine the relationship between viewing memories and significant biographical events that emerge from the data, in particular the impact of the birth of siblings and the accompanying awareness of parental sexuality. I will then explore aleatory texts and textual moments as 'containers' of a range of powerful projections and intergenerational identifications that are generated in response to identity in transition.

Psychoanalytic film theory has prioritised key developmental moments associated with knowledge about 'origins', such as the Oedipus complex. As explained in Chapter One the psychic experience of cinema was theorised through the text. Sue and Mary's case studies allow us to understand this experience and the associated forms of identification more fully than film theory had previously allowed. Both cases offer potentially new ways of understanding identification in film and television texts, in particular the importance of moving beyond the parent-child Oedipal triangle to take account of the impact of siblings, something that has previously been neglected. The pen portraits encapsulate relevant contextual information told in relation to discussions of films and programmes in the interviews.

4.1 Pen Portraits: Sue

Sue is lively, animated and fashionable. She has three children: Jack (19), at college, Faith (17), in the sixth form, and Henry (10). The family live in their privately owned home in a working class semi-rural village close to where she grew up, and from which she has not ventured far from ever since. Sue married a working-class man

who works in manufacturing. She says she had a happy childhood but the family were not well off. Her parents live close by and she has one brother 12 years younger who is unmarried and settled in London after graduating from university. Sue, like most of her friends, married and "had babies young". When her daughter was beginning junior school Sue "suddenly" thought, "I'm not really ready for her to go", and she "suddenly wanted another baby" resulting in the birth of her final son.

Having a child after a considerable gap was something Sue had experience of as she had been an only child for 12 years, when her mother announced she was pregnant with Paul, her (only) brother. Sue found this incredibly traumatic at the time and was "*absolutely devastated*" at the news. She remembers putting her head on the table when confronted with the news and "just sobbing and sobbing". Once he was born Sue had to face a degree of displacement, as "this baby just got all the attention" from her mother. He was a difficult baby and remains "intense" and "hard work" and a cause of much anxiety for her mother, particularly when he left home and went to university. However, Sue stresses once he was born she "adored him and still does" and she became a "little mother to him".

Sue worries about her son Jack's personal safety the way her mother did about Paul and describes him in a similar way as "hard work" and "intense". Both characteristics are associated with Sue's favourite actor, Christopher Eccleston. She will "watch anything he is in" but likes the "intense" and "dark" roles he plays. Sue also finds him sexually attractive and he is an object of desire for Sue who keeps her strong feelings for him a secret from her family and friends.

Sue described herself as a child who was "no trouble" to her Mum but her decisions to leave school, get a job in a bank and then marry were not popular with her parents, especially her mother. She allowed her to leave school only on the promise she would continue studying at night school, which she did, and she passed an A level. Once her children were older, Sue started an Open University degree, which remains unfinished but she maintains she will finish "eventually". Sue expresses some regret about not having continued in further education. Currently she works as a librarian for the local public library service. Sue is slightly unusual in her circle of friends and family in that she will often take herself off to the cinema to watch a film on her own. She prefers this, as she does not have to worry whether others are enjoying the film, but also because it takes her away from home where she is often disturbed by family demands. However, she says, "It's funny because I say I prefer to see things at the cinema yet the ones that have had the biggest impression on me I've watched at home". And it is those films that she discusses.

Mary

Mary has been married to Phil for "twenty five happy years". She works as a classroom assistant and Phil is a caretaker. They have one son (23) who recently graduated from university and is engaged to be married. The family are born-again Christians. They are heavily involved in youth and other voluntary work at the church and see their 'church family as important as their real family'. They live in a

small cosy terraced house in a less affluent part of the town. In material terms they are not wealthy, but socially the family are well known and well-liked. They have "lots and lots of friends" and this provides a sense of their importance and success.

As Mary was growing up she says she was described as "loud" and "confident" but she spent her teenage years feeling "lonely in the family". She was put under what she felt was "immense pressure" from her parents to "deliver educationally" and "there was always this undercurrent in the family that she should marry a doctor or lawyer" and "live in a big house". So she disappointed her parents as she married a builder and did not make the grades for university. Mary had wanted to go to university to study Psychology but she did not obtain the required grades and has had a "fascination" with challenging, psychological film and television texts ever since. Her loneliness and feelings of being an outsider began when she lost her position as an only child at age eight. Her parents had her first sister, closely followed by another child a year later. This change was traumatic for Mary as following this she felt "very much one on my own out of five".

There were some benefits to the large age gap for Mary. Her father worked and was also a local councillor so he was often absent and as the eldest child she "quite often got to watch things with my Mum that ordinarily I wouldn't have been able to watch". In particular she liked *Tenko*,²³ and she explained that her favourite character was a woman named Bea who was seen as a 'bad' girl and a strong character, but insecure and sensitive underneath. Mary saw herself in her teenage years in much the same way: "confident" and "brash" on the surface, but underneath sensitive and lonely. She calls this feature of her taste in film characters 'layers', as she is always probing and looking below the surface, moving beyond first impressions. This is exemplified for Mary by a character such as Vivian, the prostitute in *Pretty Woman*. Exploring 'good' and 'bad' girls through film and television texts was an important part of Mary's viewing pleasure as she grew up. However, her identification with 'bad' girls always had to be hidden from her mother who "wouldn't have approved of Bea" as a role model for instance:

We had conversations [about *Tenko*] and I agreed with every word she said because that *wasn't* the done thing to say *you'd* seen something else whatever, or *you* thought she [Bea] was something *different*. I thought there was more to her than what you could see on the surface.

Mary is aware that she also played an important role for her mother but one that Mary was not entirely comfortable with:

I was kind of a bit of a confidant to my Mum quite a lot of the time. I realise now growing up she'd told me quite a lot of things that really weren't for *young children* to hear to be honest. I think I was her company when my Dad wasn't there. She would take me into her confidence she'd chat to me about the things that she really

²³ BBC Television 1981-1984

should've talked to her friend about. By the time I was fourteen I knew a lot of things probably fourteen year olds shouldn't know or should ever know really".

Mary doesn't say what these things are but it is clear that she was privy to information she was not mature enough to manage, perhaps uncomfortable information about her father.

Mary's Dad likes to "be in charge" and she has "inherited a bit too much of that from him". Life as a teenager was particularly hard as her father "put the most pressure" on Mary "that anyone has ever put on me in my entire life". There were rigid study times when Mary would be forced to study in her room for three hours every evening. Ultimately she still feels "vulnerable" around him but has always had an "intense bond" with him. So watching television with her Mum when her father was out was a welcome relief, although her relationship with her Mum was also difficult. She was not allowed to formulate her own opinions and had to go along with whatever her mother thought.

Mary remembers having a vivid imagination as a child and being prone to sleep-walking, nightmares and "crying a lot". Television programmes such as *The Singing Ringing Tree*, often featured in her dreams.

Mary married an easy-going man who is happy to let her take charge. He was the only boy in a family of seven children; like Mary he was used to having sisters. She feels her relationship with her only son Sam is very different to those she experienced with her parents. Both Mary and Phil are extremely proud of Sam and she explains passionately that they "just adore" him.

Mary likes programmes that challenge her intellectually; mysteries or intelligent dramas, science fiction, psychological dramas and the "odd chick flick". Like Sue she has often been unexpectedly confronted emotionally by films she has watched at home.

4.2 "Seven or eight" and "eleven or twelve": siblings and sexuality

This section is organised around significant memories and texts for both women. Building on Bion, Bollas proposes that one of the ways we use objects is as a container for self-states. These self-states may be preserved within an object for safety; others may be difficult states of fear or confusion, which can be returned to for unconscious reparative work. The title of this section refers to themes that emerged from Sue and Mary's data, which suggest powerful feelings and emotions associated with biographical events are located in significant texts. These biographical links are not consciously articulated by interviewees, but emerge as themes when data are considered as a whole.

For Sue, the age of "eleven or twelve" is associated with events at the time of her brother's birth. Mary describes a number of upsetting and frightening scenarios relating to film and television when she was "seven or eight", also a time when her

siblings arrived. In Sue's data we find "age twelve" frequently appearing across her interviews. She tells a number of stories involving her brother's activities at twelve. She had another child when her middle child was nearly twelve, and her favourite film, *Big*, involves a twelve-year-old boy - suggesting that the significance of events occurring when Sue was twelve extend into her adult subjectivity. This section, based in part on particular texts, will offer reasons why the time of the arrival of siblings is significant for understanding identification with narratives, plot and character.

Sue: *Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte*²⁴

Psychological and media 'effects' research has often concentrated on young children watching films which contain 'adult' material. This study presents a retrospective perspective, as both women present stories of being terrified by adult texts as children. A biographical perspective can help understand the nature of the fear.

On a visit to her grandmother's home around the time of her brother's birth, Sue had a frightening and unforgettable experience. She was allowed to stay up and she saw a film which: "Had such an impact on me. It scared me to death. Do you know I used to go to bed shaking ... oh for weeks and weeks". Sue gives this account of the narrative and frightening moments:

Bette Davis played this character, she was going to get married and for some reason her fiancée was murdered by having his head chopped off and his hand or something. I can remember the scene with his head rolling [with actions] down the stairs. I can't remember how the film ended. I think it was all in her mind. I think it was the sister trying to drive her insane. It was all set up by the sister and this bloke set it up to make her think she was insane. I didn't know that until I saw the end by which time I was absolutely terrified.

Rosenbaum (1998) argues that out of the innumerable early life experiences a small number of powerful childhood memories, such as the above, are retained. These memories play a 'pivotal role' in the life story. The importance is found in both what is 'revealed' but at the same time what is 'hidden'; this can be thought of in terms of manifest and latent meaning. The accuracy or the 'facts' of childhood memories such as this are less important than the *affect* and emotional significance of the event (1998:69). Indeed, some factual inaccuracies, when viewed in relation to other evidence present in the data, can be seen less as inaccuracies and more productively as forms of parapraxis. For instance, Sue remembers that it was Charlotte's sister that plotted to drive her insane. However, Charlotte was, like Sue, an *only* child. It was Charlotte's cousin who plotted, to force her into suicide to

²⁴ 1964 Dir Robert Aldrich USA. A gothic horror starring Bette Davis. The story revolves around Charlotte a middle-aged spinster who lives with guilt and fear after being fooled into thinking she murdered her fiancé in her youth. A friend and a cousin try to convince Charlotte she is mad in an attempt to force her into suicide so they can inherit her fortune.

inherit her fortune. If we place this in the context of Sue's fears about the impending or recent arrival of a sibling after almost twelve years as an only child, it is possible to see this as an example of the way internal unconscious phantasy, as part of a response to significant life changing events, permeates the interpretation of this text.

In psychoanalytic research parent-child relationships and interactions have been prioritised; the centrality of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis demonstrates this. Lateral relationships with siblings and also peers have been neglected (Mitchell, 2003). Freud observed sibling envy and hostility, theorising this was because siblings are always in competition for a parent's attention and threaten to 'replace' the existing child in the parent's affections. Mitchell explains how the presence of an actual sibling or the threat of one to come causes hostility, not only because of the fear of displacement, but because "it indicates that the mother has had a sexual relationship with a father" (2003:10). This is traumatic for the existing child. The sibling "is *par excellence* someone who threatens the subject's uniqueness" (2003:11). Even when a sibling is loved, in the eldest child there is always an accompanying hate as the child realises it can never be the only baby again. Second children realise they will never hold the privileged position of the first-born child (Mitchell 2003). Therefore, if siblings can provoke intense hatred, they *must* be significant to the inner world (Coles, 2003). In Sue and Mary's cases this loss of uniqueness is intensified due to the large age gap between them and their siblings.

Relationships with siblings have their own intrinsic value and are "introjected and form an important role in the development of self and identity" (Hadfield et al, 2006). Siblings raise questions about similarity and difference. There are never just two separate children: siblings are always one of a set and inextricably linked, the same, yet different. This points to individual identity as being relational, involving subjective processes of differentiation. Sue and Mary's cases illustrate the way this differentiation is lived psychically; in phantasy and socially in the way class and gender are experienced and become meaningful.

Sue, like Charlotte, was an only child, whose emotional and physical existence was threatened by the arrival of a phantasised wicked sibling who could potentially annihilate her. Kleinian theory points to the aggressive nature of unconscious phantasy in children. There is evidence of this when Sue explains that she "imagines herself" into the film and says: "I was Charlotte and I murdered that man".

Film theory illustrates that there is no necessary correlation between gender and on-screen identification, in phantasy and in any on-screen scenario, the spectator can move around and occupy multiple positions. If Sue was Charlotte and she did chop off a head and a hand to murder someone who happened to be a man, it is possible that at the same time as she perceived a threat from the arrival of a sibling, she was also frightened by her own powerful primitive phantasies of death and destruction towards this male sibling, or her parents, or both.

Sue and Mary's texts:

***Big*, *The Birds*²⁵ and *The Singing Ringing Tree*²⁶**

According to Juliet Mitchell, loss of uniqueness and accompanying sexual awareness associated with sibling birth is traumatic (Mitchell, 2003). Trauma is registered and revisited unconsciously and through processes of afterwardsness in films and film moments (Sutton, 2004). Below, traumatic events and their relationship to films, identification and affective responses are described. Sue revisits the time of her puberty when growing sexual awareness became intensified by the fact of her brother's birth. Mary experiences a similar sexual awareness at a younger age, which is registered but not fully understood.

Big is Sue's favourite film because it makes her "laugh" and she "always cries". The film revolves around Josh, a twelve-year-old boy, who makes a wish on a fairground machine to be 'big' and wakes the next day to find he is a thirty-year-old man whom his mother then mistakes for Josh's child abductor. He manages to convince his school friend of his identity and this friend then helps him to flee his home and go to live in New York City where, by chance, he obtains a job in a toy company. He quickly rises to the top because of his child-centred thinking on toys and play, and becomes romantically involved with a female executive. Much of the humour revolves around the misunderstandings between adults and a child who looks like an adult man. Eventually he finds the machine again and turns back into a boy.

I have noted that age twelve is an evocative time for Sue because of the arrival of her brother and son. The humour of the film revolves around misunderstandings between adult and child perception and interpretation of events. Sue especially likes one scene between Josh and a woman he is about to enter into a sexual relationship with:

I mean he's only a little lad really at the end of the day, and she's a sophisticated woman. [] and she says, "where exactly are we going" "Where's this relationship going?" Well he's only a young lad. And then it clicks, what she means, and it means "I fancy you". Oh you must remember this is where he starts beating her up with a magazine. Well you know what it's like with teenagers, well kids, if they like each other they lark about and start beating each other up and that's what he does, he starts bashing her with a magazine and she thinks that's what turns him on!

²⁵ *Big*: 1988 Dir Penny Marshall USA *The Birds* 1963 Dir Alfred Hitchcock USA

²⁶ 1958 Dir Francesco Sefani GDR. An Eastern European instructive fairy tale where a conceited princess is forced to confront her selfishness, which results in her love being turned into a bear. She must undergo various trials (involving numerous beasts) and eventually she learns compassion and kindness, ultimately saving her prince.

This story was remarkably similar in content and emotional tone to a story Sue had told me earlier in the interview. She described a 'risky' situation in childhood, where humour diffused a difficult situation. Sue witnessed her father hit her Mum on her bottom during an argument. Sue explained she "had to leave the room" not because it upset her but because it was "so funny". Both stories contain 'hitting' with an underlying sexual connotation. In both accounts there is a growing awareness of adult sexuality from a child's perspective and in both stories the humour makes the moment 'safe'. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) explain that the primal scene is traumatic for the infant. It can be witnessed, where the child sees the parents in the act of intercourse. It can also be *inferred* 'on the basis of certain indications and phantasies'; most significantly it is interpreted by the child as 'an act of violence on the part of the father' (1967/1973:335). The two stories are therefore linked by inferred sexual relations through physical violence. Sue identifies further with the awakening knowledge of sexuality that occurred for her at a similar age.

The theme of sexuality and trauma continues in Mary's data. She tells me about being frightened and upset by films *The Birds* and the children's fantasy *The Singing Ringing Tree* around the time of the arrival of her sisters. Both women have returned to these events, and it is possible to see the way film moments were utilised in phantasy both at the time and retrospectively to address the experienced trauma. Mary discusses her memory of *The Birds*:

I remember coming downstairs in the middle of the night²⁷. I don't know whether I was upset and I couldn't sleep and I walked in on my Mum and Dad who were watching Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. And it was the bit where the lady sat at the bottom of her bed and had her eyes pecked out. And that gave me nightmares for years and years. I have to say by then the damage was done. It was a film they were enjoying and they were quite engrossed in. And I wandered in and I don't quite know why I wandered in. I used to do a lot of wandering when I was little. I did a lot of sleepwalking but I was definitely awake at this point. I'm guessing I was *nearly eight* [my emphasis]. And erm it was in black and white. And I walked into the room and in the time it took for them to realise I was in the room and obviously there was no remote control, you'd 've had to jump out of your seat and run over and turn it off. And in the time that any of that may or may not have happened and I'd been turned round and ushered out of the room I'd walked right in at the bit where the lady is sitting on the floor at the end of the bed and the birds are pecking her eyes out and that was enough. [] I had nightmares for a long time after that. I can remember asking my Mum about it asking her why the birds were attacking the lady.

Mary described discussing this film and her mother's inadequate response (discussed later), as "children feeling the vibe of emotion but not understanding what is going on". This is similar to Freud's 'screen memory' and Rosenbaum (1998) argues that all childhood memories are 'screen memories'. These memories from

²⁷ I have presumed that to a young child the perception was the 'middle of the night', but this is likely to have been ten or eleven o'clock.

childhood often seem factually 'trivial and unimportant' but are associated with a strong emotional feeling that is not understood, something Freud explained as a process of displacement, where 'genuinely significant impressions' and traumatic events have been repressed (2002:45).

Mary was not reading the film's narrative but responding to a powerful visual moment. If we examine the language and tone of the incident involving *The Birds* it can also be interpreted through the concept of the primal scene. Mary walked in on her parents who were "engrossed" in something. It took them a few moments to realise she was there and for them to then react by quickly jumping up and stopping what they were doing. This is strikingly similar to what would happen had the child walked in on its parents having sex. In Mary's case this is reinforced by the fact that she says she was 'nearly eight'. This would mean that one sister had already been born and due to the very short age gap the next had probably been conceived. Curiosity about origins would have been significant for Mary. She also notes that she had often been sleepwalking and 'done some strange wandering about at night' as a child, so it is quite possible that there had been other occasions where she had become aware of her parents' sexuality, perhaps walking in on them or hearing something and the film moment becomes a screen memory for this. The trauma is heightened by the momentous consequence of the birth of her siblings who displaced her; a separation she did not overcome.

Klein asserts that children have instinctual knowledge of sexuality and can have knowledge of a penis and vagina meeting without the 'actual witnessing of the primal scene' (Hinshelwood, 1989:297). This knowledge is emotional rather than factual knowledge; where the child understands benevolent and malevolent aspects of the relationships between the objects involved in a way, however, that linguistically and developmentally the child is not mature enough to articulate. As Mary stated, the ideas were *sensed* but not understood. Now, I want to explore further how this film moment was involved in the creation of meaning. This can be viewed as an example of a mutually constitutive process of subject formation between text and child viewer.

Voyeurism in the cinema, was theorised as a form of pleasurable looking which allows the spectator to engage 'safely' in forms of prohibited looking. However, for Mary, the image of the woman with her pecked out eyes would signify that she had seen (in reality or phantasy) something she should not have seen and also that, in consequence, the viewer is punished. This is central to the Oedipus myth, as well as the *Garden of Eden* and *Tower of Babel* myths, which deal with the central problem of the quest for knowledge and the punishment of curiosity. In the case of Oedipus the punishment was blindness (Grinberg et al, 1993). The scene in the film may have allowed a degree of displacement to occur, as Mary is able to focus her emotion on the image rather than on any other underlying cause such as witnessing or phantasising a primal scene. As I will explain below, the film moment also functioned like the final piece in a jigsaw of meaning. The image on screen functioned like a 'link' making the experience meaningful. This would have been frightening for Mary, as she would expect 'punishment' for seeing something she

should not have seen or having knowledge about something she should not know about.

Scott notes that when we think about the past we also *see it* and the visual aspects are incredibly important (1996). The visual is also accompanied by feelings. Bion maintains we learn from experience. He is interested in the way in which sense impressions and emotions become meaningful thoughts. He devises the explanatory concepts of alpha-function and alpha-elements to explain how raw sense data are turned into elements that provide the psyche with material for dreams and other unconscious work as well as conscious thoughts. Alpha elements are 'enabling'. Raw sense data: what we see, hear, smell, sensations and feelings, are not meaningful on their own, it is only when they are linked up that these alpha elements become meaningful. They are functional and can be *used* in a form of 'thought', which can be described as conscious and unconscious meaning making. They can also store emotional experiences and are involved in transformative and generative processes and responding to experiences through mood. This is necessary for individuals to be able to form a relationship with reality in which they can survive emotionally. It is the coming together of sensory data elements that allows thinking to occur and this model differs from one that holds that thoughts can occur just because the mental apparatus for thinking exists.

Alpha-elements may cohere or separate at the 'contact barrier' (Bion, 1962), a kind of semi-permeable membrane that keeps conscious and unconscious, sleep, dream and wakefulness separate, and allows the subject to have a sense of the past, present and future (Grindberg et al, 1993). The contact barrier is different to the notion of the pre-conscious, which Freud mainly used to describe a kind of gate-keeping function for repressed contents of the unconscious. The contact barrier *is* protective in that it maintains a balance between the exchange of stimuli and material between conscious and unconscious preventing too much distortion of reality from phantasy for instance - but at the same time allowing enough movement for thought to be formed to help the subject function in the social world, as well as internally. It can be argued that because of their sensory appeal (as film theorists noted), films viewed in the cinema and on television operate close to the contact barrier and are particularly useful for thinking and thought generation.

Bion (1962) offers other ways in which we can understand processes taking place for Mary. The earliest relationships between the mother and infant play an important role in the development of thought. The baby uses projective identification and projects intolerable feelings such as separation, and frustrations, concerning the breast for instance, into the mother, who then takes these feelings and 'contains' them. She then returns them back in a manageable form. Mary sought reassurance from her mother to help her make sense of the film. But Mary's mother was unable to contain or assuage her fears. Mary's mother often explained things to her in a very adult way "in quite a lot of detail". She tried to "rationally explain it to me" and even though she was very young Mary remembers "it would've been very much taught to me as a grown up even at that age". So Mary explained her response to

this and other similar occasions: "I remember what I did a lot of was to actually make up the rest of the story because I was quite shocked".

Mary was given an explanation she was not mature enough to understand. Her mother, for whatever reason, was not able to adequately 'contain' Mary's fears which still remain stored in the film moment. Films/texts are different objects to human objects as there are processes of unconscious communication which take place between people. However they can be used in thought and contribute to learning that comes from sensory experience. The viewer can project into a text, as Bollas notes, but the film cannot do the work of transforming and mollifying particular individual frustrations, phantasies or fears, they can only store or hold something for protection, suggesting film viewing does not operate fully container-contained processes of communication. The film cannot know what the viewer feels. What is interesting and is a mark of Mary's resilience is that, left with no option she made the story and the particular moment safe by inserting it into a self-created narrative structure she could cope with.

Children's fairy stories were also fear-provoking and there is further evidence of frightening images from childhood being associated with sibling arrival and sexuality seen in Mary's fear "of a man changing into a bear from his feet up" in *The Singing Ringing Tree*, another text encountered around the age of seven. She would see:

A big man-sized bear who almost seemed like to the ceiling standing in my bedroom and he'd *always* be in the same place in the corner of my room. It was the process of metamorphosis that was frightening. He changed from the feet up. But that part of him was bear and part of him was man. And then the man bit disappeared and the man bit arrived.

I have emphasised the interesting parapraxis where the man disappears to be replaced by a *man* rather than a bear. This slip indicates that the bear represented a man,²⁸ and the bear is 'the beast who walks like a man' (Warner 1995:301). Similarly, Freud's patient 'Wolfman' feared the wolf that was 'standing upright and striding along'. Wolfman's fear concerned his father and arose in response to his witnessing of a primal scene. So it is plausible to link Mary's father to the bear as narrative events in the text are set in motion by a returning father, and Mary's father was frequently absent at work or meetings. The fact that the bear changes from the feet up is another possible link to the primal scene, as this would be the way in which the scene would be encountered initially before the child's presence is noticed. Freud also analysed the symbolism of feet in relation to sexuality, as the child will often experience looking at genitals from below moving upwards. And it has been noted that there is a relationship between narratives involving animal grooms, such as the bear, and the acceptance of sexuality (Warner, 1995; Bettelheim, 1976).

²⁸ Mary also explained that she was often terrified as she was convinced she could see snakes in her bedroom. Freudian theory would also link this with sexuality.

Mary explains the narrative:

The princess was spiteful and selfish and full of her own importance and the prince was very lovely and kind and just didn't get back in time with this tree and so he got turned into a bear. And she had to learn to love somebody other than herself.

The omnipotent and narcissistic princess has to be displaced and learn to love somebody other than herself. Mary's own centrality with her parents is lost at this time due to the arrival of her siblings. A common-sense understanding of the father-daughter relationship often found in popular culture revolves around the ideas of the daughter as her father's 'princess'. Also, this narrative features a prince who fails to get back in time as well as an absent father, rather like her father who was often absent and late home. This prince who was "lovely and kind" is turned into a beast in the narrative and also becomes a beast in Mary's bedroom once Mary begins to question her sexual origins. The prince is also condemned to become a beast because of the selfish and spiteful actions of the princess. The princess loses her beauty and the bear tells her that the animals see her 'true' nature: selfish and spiteful. The princess has to learn humility and kindness in order for her outer beauty to return. Consequently, it can be asserted that the bear is a reminder of her own destructive nature.

Mary locates this story and others in an account of her behaviour at this time when she was often distressed and did 'extraordinary things', such as sleepwalking. Freud's study 'Wolfman's' began when his parents noticed changes in his behaviour and personality. Clearly, Mary was facing some tumultuous changes in her life that were distressing. It is possible that the bear represents those parts of Mary that felt angry, destructive and envious in wanting to destroy the good object of the prince. In her phantasy he had become a beast because of the destruction of her omnipotent phantasies about herself and her place in her father's phantasies and desires about Mary - his own little 'princess'. So, there is also the bear as a reminder of the guilt, and this represents a move toward the depressive position in relation to Mary's coming to terms with the birth of her siblings.

4.3 Intergenerational identification and identity in transition

As children, both Sue and Mary were forced to re-negotiate identity in response to siblings and the data indicated that particular texts such as *Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte* and *The Birds* were used in meaning making. Nevertheless, in adult life, it is 'mothering' that coheres the disparate texts discussed. The discussion of favourite films points to the psycho-social nature of mothering as it is lived and experienced in relation to viewing. Complex identifications with particular texts illustrate how the social categories of class and gender are lived consciously and unconsciously. The texts identified are indicative of forms of *après-coup* or afterwardsness (Laplanche, 1999) where particular scenarios are revisited in the light of recent experiences and concerns. I will begin with Sue's case, which

provides more evidence of the ways siblings impact on viewers' identification with particular characters or textual moments, evidenced through her fandom of Christopher Eccleston. For Sue, the arrival of a sibling has also influenced her experience of mothering. Where mothering appears in the data it is linked with intergenerational identification and I want to explore two aspects of this. The first concerns intergenerational identification as a symptom of conflicts associated with identity in transition, particularly present when a woman becomes a mother²⁹. The second concerns the idea of separation.

Faimberg explains that situations of change produce anxiety, which demands identity to be restructured (2005:19). An 'outer' social identity, influences changes in subjectivity at the same time, and mothering is one such situation as sibling arrival is another. Mothering can be thought of as a 'pivotal' generation, as for the first time the woman has access to multiple identifications: with her own mother as mother, and to her own experience of being a mothered child as well as the many incorporated internal object relations with significant others such as fathers and siblings (Hollway, 2009, 2010). This form of intergenerational identification points to the relational features of identity. Mothers and babies start out as one and must separate to become two beings that are in a relationship: siblings are not two separate children that come together, but are one of a set. Issues of difference and separation are emphasised in sibling and parent-child relationships. This can be examined through identifications, which drive emotional responses to texts.

Sue: brothers, sons and Christopher Eccleston

This section will examine some complex forms of identification linking Sue as parent, sibling and fan, demonstrating the limitations of textual analysis alone as a method for understanding textual identification. I will show how complex biographical events and familial relationships impact on the development of taste. Sue's interviews are characterised by a to and fro movement between narratives about texts and biographical narratives that relate to Sue, her brother and eldest son. The psychoanalytic and narrative method I have adopted attends to the emotional tone of interviews, and to the feelings generated in response to particular themes. This cannot be understood as separate from transference and countertransference, as I felt strong emotional responses every time Sue talked about her brother and eldest son who are "hard work", "intense" and "difficult to live with". When Sue discusses Christopher Eccleston the tone remains the same and, despite Eccleston being a critically acclaimed versatile actor, for Sue, all the parts he plays are the same: "dark", "intense" and "full of angst" and she believes "he's probably like that in real life", indicating some blurring of the boundaries between fantasy and reality. Unconsciously, the three men are connected in Sue's mind and this can be seen in the appearance of common narrative themes and emotional tone. The data also provide examples of intergenerational transferences of anxiety, for example from Sue's mother about the personal safety of Paul who lives in London, to Sue who is continually worried about her eldest son being involved in a violent attack resulting in death. In turn, Christopher Eccleston becomes involved in

²⁹ This also applies more generally to becoming a parent.

some of these fears, anxieties, desires and phantasies. These connections manifest themselves in Sue's identification with particular texts.

*Our Friends in the North*³⁰ is a significant text as it is here that Eccleston initially functioned as an aleatory object for Sue. Bollas uses the term aleatory to explain the element of surprise when an object interpellates the subject. Eccleston later developed into a complex evocative object but the aleatory moment is enduring and is captured in Sue's description of Eccleston:

Well he's got a Geordie accent. Yeah I mean he's an actor he can't possibly have a Geordie accent but *that's* what I hear.

In fact Eccleston is from Lancashire and he does not have a clearly defined accent when interviewed, so it is not Geordie as Sue perceives it, but this points to an element of fixity associated with the impact of the aleatory moment in Eccleston as evocative object.

I have explained that the birth of Sue's brother, coming as Sue entered a time of increasing awareness of sexuality coupled with the large age gap, impacted on the way their relationship developed. She learnt about parenting through her own relationship with him and from observing her mother parent an infant of a different sex. As he grew up Sue was confronted by Paul's journey as a man, born much later and with greater opportunities for social mobility that had not been open to Sue. This seems to crystallise around the figure of Eccleston.

The series spans a thirty-year period and follows the lives of a group of friends from a working class community in the north of England. Eccleston plays Nicky, a student, whose girlfriend Mary, is also destined for university. Following a brief relationship with another member of the group, Mary becomes pregnant and marries young, giving up her chance of going to university. Geordie, the fourth member of the group moves to London, initially enjoying success, but eventually ending up involved in drugs and crime. A pivotal narrative theme concerns education and the avenues open to working-class people to change their economic and social circumstances. For Mary, this revolves around the idea of throwing away her educational opportunities for marriage, (which does not work out), and babies. It begins in 1964 and ends in 1995, following the experiences of characters that are the same age and from working-class backgrounds like Sue. There are clearly opportunities for narrative identification for Sue. Covering the thirty year period Sue has lived through, the narrative speaks to Sue's experiences; 'marrying young', 'babies' and her tenuous attempts to hold onto education, through night school and an unfinished degree.

Sue employs a combination of projective identification and unconscious phantasy around Eccleston as 'star'. Klein argues that family members exist as internal objects and will have been subject to the work of unconscious phantasy. Sue

³⁰ 1995 BBC television (BBC2) UK

projects aspects of her brother, which reside in her own internal object relations, into Eccleston because of some form of recognition - possibly a combination of physical similarity coupled with narrative identification in the aleatory moment. He then embodies and contains the parts of her brother that are "difficult" and "intense". Like Eccleston's character, Nicky, Paul was able to go to university, live in a large city and become an attractive cosmopolitan man. Sue addresses her own life choices through the differences between her experiences and those of her brother, who would have been at university at the time the series was transmitted. This was a difficult time for Sue and she describes feelings of resentment towards her brother:

We went through a phase, I suppose when, when he was away at University and I was so young when I got married, and I'd got the kids. And I remember thinking, 'maybe I should've done that, maybe I should've gone that way'. And there was a bit of resentment that he'd done it and I hadn't. But it passed. We did have a bit of a clash about that time.

Paul's trajectory confronts Sue with the reality of her choices to marry and become a mother at a young age. One effect of siblings creating a set is that they have to struggle to assert their differences against a backdrop of this belonging. In Sue's case the age gap meant a longer than usual separation between their respective moves into education. This illustrates the psycho-social nature of identification as her internal object relations and phantasy life, formed in her particular family circumstance, meet social and cultural realities of gender and social class.

For Sue, 'education' is one area of struggle, emerging many times in the interviews and articulated unconsciously through Eccleston/Paul texts. Sue spoke about *Hearts and Minds*,³¹ another Eccleston text she discovered around the time of *Our Friends in The North*, where he starred as a teacher:

He's full of angst. I think he'd been a miner and retrained as a comprehensive schoolteacher and he was a *brilliant* teacher. *But* all the other teachers hated him because he was so upfront, so outspoken because he'd come into it late. I mean he had fights. I think he had a fight.

Clearly, there are issues around re-training and coming to the profession late in life that would have been evocative, as Sue has made a number of attempts to return to education. It is in relation to a story Sue tells later in the interview about her brother that this extract makes sense; an example of the way in which unconscious links are made without being consciously articulated. Sue explains:

He's so intense. He's got himself into a few scrapes at school, erm a few clashes with teachers. Because he's quite erm. He's quite tall and handsome and he grew up really quick. When I say grew up he became a young man quite early and he grew up. I know he had one or two clashes with male members of staff and it had a bad effect on his schoolwork. There was one

³¹ 1995 Dir Stephen Whittaker C4 UK

teacher in particular that he did have a sort of 'strutting antlers' they used to lock antlers. They went on a trip. They went on this school trip and this teacher was there and they actually, literally, they physically came to blows.

In addition to the similarities in content, the intensity and angst associated with the two men, and the clashes in the school, there could also be an element of Sue projecting her own difficulties onto her brother. He "grew up early" and this appears to justify his anger, but this anger could also be transferred from Sue's experience, becoming a "little mother" at twelve. While her own education hit problems (much to her mother's disappointment), Paul made it to university and they "did have a bit of a clash around that time".

The theme of education and social class as sites of conflict appears again in *Jude*³², another film Sue encountered when her brother was at university. Sue chooses to focus on a troubling feature of the narrative. She explained that she thought the two main characters who have a love affair, Jude and Sue were "related" and that this is "quite controversial". I explain to Sue that the characters were cousins because worryingly for Sue, she remembers them as being siblings. She says "they must've been cousins they can't have been *siblings* can they?" The key to the troubling nature of this mistake is in the sexually charged nature of her 'relationship' with Eccleston/ Paul. The statement "they can't have been siblings" is an example of the taboo around sibling incest which meant that Sue repressed her feelings for her brother, which were displaced for safety onto Eccleston, and yet prompted the mistake, the 'slip', which in psychoanalysis is symptomatic of repressed material.

I have indicated that the 'texture' of the inner world is influenced by siblings and identification with siblings plays an important part in psychic development (Coles, 2003:85). Melanie Klein pointed to desire for siblings and sexual relationships between children taking place in phantasy. For Sue there is a strong sexual attraction to Eccleston:

He's often usually involved in sex scenes. He gets his kit off. I've seen his bum loads of times. There's a scene I can remember where he's on the stairs with his girlfriend and that's fairly typical. I'm getting all hot [actions pulls at top and waves hand as if cooling face.] [Laughs].

Sue also explains that she becomes "*really, really* jealous" of "his female co-stars". Her discussion of Eccleston contains desirous sexual elements that cannot be divorced from the identification between Eccleston and her brother. As Sue approached puberty she was faced with the reality of parental sexuality, which became located around the 'fact' of her brother. Following Coles's (2003) argument that sibling desire contributes to mature sexual fulfilment, it is not surprising that Sue should associate a growing awareness of her own, and her parents', sexuality with her brother.

³² 1996 Dir Michael Winterbottom UK. A film version of Thomas Hardy's *Jude The Obscure*.

Much of this is crystallized around another moment from the film *Big* that always fills her with emotion and moves her to tears just talking about it. Significantly she describes this as a moment that 'most sums her up', so it is possible to think of this as a gestalt moment. The specific moment (and it is just that, a moment) is when the adult Josh turns back into the child. His girlfriend has taken him home and he is left wearing his executive suit, now far too big for him as he walks back into the family home. He leaves the car and walks towards his home and mother. This is how Sue tells the story:

It's just the way he's lost his innocence, do you know, he's lost his innocence but he's come back, and he's gonna grow up and go through all that but still he's lost his innocence. I mean. Well he's basically he's been with a *woman*. But I think that, he turns round and the *mum* (lots of emotion in voice) oh it's just like your baby's come back. [] And then when *she walks* [my emphasis] through the door. When he walks through the door. You don't see it, well you don't hear it. You just *see her* [my emphasis] looking through the rear windscreen and he goes out as Tom Hanks in his suit, walking towards the door then she looks again and he's got this *huge* suit on and he's gone back to his original size. And you don't hear anything. You don't hear the mother say 'what on *earth* are you doing in that suit' *she* [my emphasis] just goes in and she's so relieved.

Here we can see how Sue's inner psychic world impacts on her organisation of meaning in interpreting the film. This can be explored further. Sue makes the link that I had previously proposed that the loss of innocence associated with sexual relationships was traumatic. At the time of release onto DVD, Sue's brother would have been around twelve to fourteen years old, the time at which Sue was forced to confront sexuality. Sue's eldest son would have been a small child and Sue would therefore have had access to the powerful feelings of identification that are possible around mothering that I have discussed. Identification shifts a number of times in this short scene and demonstrated in the 'slips'. She twice says, "when *she* goes in" an example of Sue identifying with the boy and this powerful moment of transition. But at the same time she shifts and identifies with the mother, as well as identifying with desirous feelings associated with his girlfriend who observes through the window, again indicating some possible repressed sibling desire.

There are also the feelings she shares around her brother and son. Overnight, Josh, like Sue, grows up and becomes a thirty-year-old man and this would be the approximate age of Sue's brother at the time of the interviews. So Sue at this moment can yearn for her own loss of innocence. Sue can identify with Josh's mother as she remembers her own attempts at mothering her brother. She would also have seen *Big* for the first time after becoming a mother to her own son. In this moment there are a range of powerful and complex identifications, which cause Sue's strong emotional response to the narrative. They are so powerful because they switch from generation to generation and around the powerful triangle of Sue as mother and child, her brother and her son.

4.3 Mary: Both Daddy's Girl and Daddy

I have followed Mitchell's (2003) and Coles's (2003) arguments that sibling identification is often more complex than the traditional models of hostility found in some Freudian models. However, Mary's identifications and responses following the arrival of her sisters follow the 'hostile' model. Apart from discussing the impact of their births in entirely negative terms, Mary's siblings are noticeable by their absence from her discussion. It is her relationship with her parents - and her father in particular - that structures the interviews. In this section I will show how Mary's relationships with her parents resulted in particular gender identifications and also how these identifications develop over time.

Mary remembers watching *Stingray*³³ as a child and in particular was fascinated by Marina but Mary is also clear this was a form of dis-identification (Skeggs, 1997). For Mary, Marina represents traditional femininity:

She was very floaty and girly and feminine and princessy. With long blonde hair and floaty dresses [] there was a lot of fluttering of her eyes and she was so lovely underwater and girly and she didn't want to wear the trousers, going on missions, she was happy being a girl and that was nice.

Mary was part of a trio of girls who were expected to conform to cultural expectations of femininity and "made to be girls". Unlike Marina this was not a welcome role choice for Mary and required negotiation.

Mary explains:

I wasn't allowed to wear trousers. When I was little I always had to have a dress on. I wasn't allowed to have trainers. I had to have proper shoes. We weren't allowed to have train sets or that because *they were boys' toys*. So probably I've always looked for strong female role models rather than, well 'cause I always wanted a train set³⁴ when I was little. So maybe I equated that sort of thing with women who weren't all pink and fluffy and women that were more strong.

Mary was one of three girls for whom femininity was an essential requirement. Mary was also displaced as the only child by two female siblings, which might prompt antagonism towards being a girl. I want to propose that Mary's desire to differentiate herself from her sisters contributed towards her identifying herself as masculine. This was further reinforced as Mary stepped into her, often absent, father's role for her mother, evidenced in her mother's adult conversation with

³³ Gerry Anderson puppet show. Marina is a mysterious mute woman who is like a mermaid, having human legs but she swims under the sea for long periods as a mermaid would. Her affinity is with the sea. She is also an object of desire for one of the male 'agent' puppets.

³⁴ It is possible to speculate on the phallic symbolism of trains and tunnels but I will not undertake this here.

Mary. The emphasis in the interviews was not primarily concerned with either Mary's mother or her sisters. The most intensive, emotive and revealing aspects of the interviews concerned Mary's relationship with her father and her son and these are explored through the film *Father of the Bride*³⁵.

The film is a comedy where the sentimentality and emotion centre on a father's struggle to come to terms with his little girl becoming a woman, leaving home, and his replacement in her affections by another man, her future husband. There is a particular aleatory moment in the plot development, a moment of identification that captures experience of past and present conflict. This is also an example of afterwardsness where the present and other experiences prompt and transform the memory. In particular, it illustrates shifting identifications which can accompany these moments of afterwardsness.

This particular aleatory moment is also an example of mnemonic object stimulation by an object as described by Bollas, where the object is initially used in a dynamic form of memory work. As the bride in the film prepares to leave the wedding reception, her father desperately tries to have a moment with her alone so he can say goodbye, but he is thwarted at every attempt and ultimately fails. Mary says this scene "mirrors", "well it doesn't exactly mirror, but our wedding". The particular scene evokes a powerful moment of embodied affect:

When I got married *I physically couldn't* say goodbye to my parents. At the wedding reception I said goodbye to everybody else but I physically couldn't say goodbye to my parents. I managed to say goodbye to my Mum but I *couldn't* say goodbye to my Dad. Me and my Dad have a very close bond.

Mary has explained that her father pressured her intensely throughout her childhood. I have already argued that the bear Mary feared in her childhood was linked to her relationship with her father. Here, we are given access to another aspect of Mary's intense relationship with her father. Mary tells the story:

The scene at the end where she comes down the stairs. Then I became quite *desperate* to go before I had to face my Dad. And we got in the car and as we got in the car I said obviously a bit louder than I meant to say, "quick we need to go before my Dad comes". And I just remember an ethereal voice saying "your Dad's right here". And my Dad was just behind the car door. And I just *burst into floods of tears*. And we had to go away. I've never said goodbye to my Dad from when I left to get married and I never could.

As she tries to escape, her description of her Dad's appearance indicates the depth of feeling and the significance for both parties. Interestingly, she uses the word ethereal, which also points to something supernatural. Her father appears in an unearthly way, perhaps as an object that has a supernatural ability to monitor her.

³⁵ The particular version Mary speaks about is a remake of a 1950 comedy. The film tells the story of George Banks a regular middle class American family man. His daughter graduates from college and announces her engagement. The humour revolves around his attempts to retain control of the finances and organisation of the wedding.

In object relations this might also indicate that she may want to leave him behind, but this is impossible because he exists as an internal object with the power to control her. And it is his appearance, at this last moment, which reminds her of the impossibility, and it is this that brings her to tears. Separation was not fully completed, she “didn’t say goodbye” indicating some unresolved separation anxieties that are further compounded by her son’s forthcoming wedding.

What or who was Mary identifying with? She describes the film scene as “gut wrenching” and “I couldn’t believe how close it was to how I felt”. If we examine the narrative we find that the bride was happy and did not have any problems parting from her father; in fact the grief and anguish in the film were actually located with George, the father. The film, she says, “mirrored a moment when I felt very vulnerable”, but the vulnerability in the text rested with George. The film certainly triggered a memory where she felt vulnerable as a daughter, but it is as a *parent* that she now feels vulnerable. This film moment retains its intensity because it encapsulates complex intergenerational identifications between parent and child that Mary faces today:

I’m kind of facing that problem the other way round now as my son is due to leave and get married and I’m not quite sure how to let him go. Weddings, like births, are key moments of change in family relationships. Mary spends a long time discussing her relationships with her father and her son. The film allows Mary ways of expressing herself unconsciously. The data provides a powerful insight into the way intergenerational identifications shape inner subjective worlds. The wedding was not only a moment of change in the relationship; it was a microcosm of the relationship between Mary and her parents, her father in particular. Mary speaks not as bride but as father of the bride. These are complex subjective processes that must be explored further.

After the intense emotion of the story of the goodbye Mary explores her ambivalence:

My Mum and Dad did a lot of work for my wedding but at the same time they were very controlling as well. So they weren’t very much like Steve Martin in the film. In a way there’s nothing in the film that resembles our wedding.

It is interesting to note the way Mary’s position has transformed from being something she felt “mirrored” her wedding to one in which nothing resembles her wedding. Here we see evidence of conscious acknowledgement of an intergenerational identification, but this time it is a conscious identification with her father. Mary explains that in planning the wedding:

Everything had been a big battle particularly with my Dad. My Dad likes to be in charge. I’ve probably inherited a bit too much of that from him and he definitely likes to be in charge.

Mary identifies with him through her own experience of her son's forthcoming marriage. She recalls a story, which indicates some of the intensity of the relationship between Mary and her father:

I was telling Sam not long ago. Now I'm facing the prospect of him leaving. I can remember the night before I got married. I remember hearing my Dad - you'll understand what I mean but the only word I can use is *howl*. It was a cry like an *animal*. And I can remember him just *sobbing* in his bedroom and me not daring to go in because I couldn't face it. [] I understand how it was. Because often I find myself in tears when I think about Sam leaving. I know it's gonna break my heart when he goes.

It is her father's loss she identifies with and uses this to explore her own impending loss. We find familiar animal motifs from Mary's phantasy world that are associated with fear and distress, in the way she describes her Dad as a howling animal, possibly linked with the bear that stalked her in her bedroom as a child. However, her identification with her father's distress is only one aspect of a series of complex intergenerational cross-gender identifications. Below, I have emphasised a statement that is a form of parapraxis and is indicative of these and the difficult feelings they generate:

We're far closer than a mother and **daughter** [my emphasis] should be. (*corrects herself*) A mother and son should be. We're like best mates, sometimes I think that's bad but I wouldn't want it any different. But you kinda realise you pay the price for it at times. We pay the price of - not to put a strange not to put a strange twist on it - but of *adoring* him so much. And I mean we just *do*. That was the reason we never had any other children because we could never imagine sharing him with anybody. But I just *knew* from the first second I set eyes on him I couldn't *ever* share him with anybody. And it was just a very conscious decision from then on that we wouldn't have any other children.

Mary made the first part of this complex statement spontaneously in discussion of her relationship with Sam before correcting the slip. The slip encapsulates two points of identification for Mary between parent and child: the *daughter* of her parents *and* the *mother* of her son. Mary has explained that at times her relationship with her mother was often uncomfortable, but being too close would also reflect the extremely intense relationship with her father as the story of her father howling before she left home illustrates. The slip indicates slippage between past and present relationships as she notes that she sometimes thinks intense parent-child relationships are inappropriate. The intense relationship includes the parts she feels uncomfortable about that have become meshed together in her relationship with Sam. The slip is another indication of intergenerational and cross-gender identifications which are becoming intensified by the prospect of her forthcoming loss. I have explained Mary identifies with her father and his extreme distress at losing her and it is possible she has carried this for many years. Although she states 'they' did not want to share Sam she then slips into "I couldn't ever share him". It is

possible to see the slip as indicating an intergenerational transference between her father and Mary where similar intense, possibly erotic feelings structured the bond between Mary and her father. By only having one child Mary is able to maintain this erotic bond through the relationship with her son.

The displacement Mary suffered when her sisters were born is remedied by her decision not to have the triangle disrupted by having other children. Mary has an only son who can 'wear trousers' and play with train sets and not be displaced by any other females, a position Mary phantasised about as a child. Interestingly Mary married a man who is from a family of seven where the other six are girls. She says she "has never been able to decide if that's made a difference to me". Here would be someone who would be used to being displaced by girls so this could dispose him toward having a small family with an intense relationship with a child, which he would never have experienced himself. Also, it would allow him to feel comfortable with allowing Mary to 'wear the trousers' and be in charge - as she notes of her inherited characteristics from her father. Her anxiety and tears concern the reality that she is going to have to share Sam with another woman. History repeats itself, but with Mary in the position of her father, like George Banks at the wedding but still not knowing how she "will be able to say goodbye".

In the extract below Mary's identifications shift again, this time to the position of child in relation to her father, evidenced again through another example of parapraxis:

I was really pleased when Sam got his degree results and I said to him "ring your Granddad". I was really pleased that he was able to ring my Dad and tell him. I knew that **my Granddad** [my emphasis] would be just over the moon about it and I was really glad that I didn't ring my Dad because I'd be doing it for all the wrong reasons, to impress my Dad. And I know that he absolutely adores me and he thinks the world of me but I've always felt kind of felt like I'm not quite good enough. And I've always felt like just doing one more thing that will make it all right when I know that that's not true and I feel very much a little girl when I have an argument with my Dad. I couldn't tell him I didn't agree with him without feeling really quite bad about it. I mean I love my Mum to bits as well but I'm definitely a Daddy's Girl.

Mary explains that she finds herself remaining in a parent/ child relationship with her father and finds a way, through her temporary shift into her son's position, to please her father in a way that is impossible for her to do as Mary. It is difficult for Mary, who has not fully been able to separate from her father, to be able then to separate from her son.

Discussion of her wedding also becomes more ambivalent when she explains:

I would find more reality in *Meet the Fockers* because my Mum and Dad were very much 'Oh dear she's going to marry a builder'. [] When Phil asked if it would be all right if we got engaged my Dad's comment was very off hand

and he said "Oh I dunno what you're asking me for" and I was very disappointed in that, 'cause I know how much courage it had taken for Phil to do that. I was really angry with my Dad for not giving it the respect that it deserved. I'm quite sure that they felt it was all a bit beneath me and that really annoys me because my Dad very much had that from my Grandparents. My Dad very much felt that her parents, he wasn't good enough for her and he found that quite a battle and I would've hope he wouldn't make the same mistake.

The wedding scene in the film generates anxiety as it provokes memories and feelings. An immense amount of psychic work is generated in response to this moment, which is further worked through in the interviews. Film theory has devoted enormous efforts to the Oedipus complex as a way of understanding identifications and pleasures. Faimberg argues that the Oedipus complex must be extended to include the 'Oedipal configuration' (2005:50) which also includes *intergenerational* patterns of identification. As Walkerdine (1997) notes in her work on Tinkerbell, it is not enough to explore the child's desire in relation to the parents; the fantasies of the parent about the child are equally important. These include not only the cultural resources available to provide the raw materials of fantasy, but also the idea of history. The 'end' result of the child's move through the Oedipus complex - the identification with the 'correct' male or female parent along with the separation issues involved in becoming a differentiated subject - are major achievements, but as this example suggests, they are also unstable.

Faimberg argues that the child's identifications are formed in relation to particular narcissistic conflict solutions of parents that may have been inherited. In each case the mechanisms of projective identification have ensured this transmission. This form of intergenerational transmission of internal conflict is a 'universal phenomenon' (Faimberg, 2005:18). As I have noted previously, particular families mediate approval, prohibition, love, and dependency in historically and socially contingent circumstances. As Reiss (1981) notes, transference is an important concept in families where it contributes to the development of 'shared constructs' - which provide unconscious templates to family members as they approach reality and the social world. The child must achieve separation from the parents but at the same time the parents must also differentiate their own histories and desires from the child, and this is a key tension. It is this Oedipal configuration that accounts for the points of slippage in Mary's identifications where she moves between daughter, mother, son, grandson, daddy's girl and daddy. The particular way in which this happens Faimberg calls a 'telescoping of generations'. In this telescoping the difference in generation is blurred, allowing Mary to experience the scene in *Father of the Bride* from a variety of positions.

As Faimberg explains, narcissistic identifications are the result of the way in which the child is 'approved' or 'disapproved' in particular families. Layton (2004) also points out the significance of approval in families and its relationship to the fantasies that underpin social hierarchies. The parents, often as a result of some inherited narcissistic issue of their own, project omnipotent characteristics and

phantasies onto the child, which the parent wishes to see reflected back to ensure the continuation of the omnipotent phantasy. Despite being located in the individual, these issues cohere around social reality and the need to conform. For Mary, this manifested itself in the pressure to be a traditionally feminine, good girl who achieves educationally. In most cases it is impossible for the child to meet the narcissistic desires of the parents, who can only love the bits of the child that acknowledge those loved or approved parts of the parent's self. Mary became skilled at hiding her true thoughts, feelings and desires she developed "layers". Bollas argues that each child is born with a 'unique idiom of psychic organisation' - akin to Winnicott's spontaneous and alive 'true self'. The child becomes 'instructed by the implicate logic of their unconscious relational intelligence in the family's way of being' (1992:51). Later, the child develops and begins making choices about friends, play, interests and also 'aspects of the mother and father to give expression to the self'. Following Faimberg, this latter trend in particular becomes a point of unconscious conflict to which the child 'bends' rather than risk disapproval, perhaps, as Winnicott (1965) notes, at the expense of developing a false self.

If the child's choices are spontaneous then a 'true self' (Winnicott, 1960,1990) or the dissipation of idiom (Bollas, 1992, 1995) ultimately leads to psychic growth. However if this process is interrupted by powerful conflicts deposited in the child from the parents through projective identification, the child will struggle with conflicts between internal objects. Faimberg states that the child must not only collude in the parents' narcissistic phantasies but he must also become a repository for hated and unbearable parts of the parents' own history. We can see above that Mary and her husband are carrying historical traumas for her father who also suffered from disapproval and feelings of social failure. Mary carries the unbearable 'not good enough' part for her father; something which emerges when the child tries to separate and articulate his spontaneous true self. This process explains Mary's attachment to 'layers' in texts where characters hide parts of the self so 'things are not what they seem'. As a child Mary had to relegate her own childhood and spontaneous needs to those of her parents. Developing a form of psychic self-reliance, she dealt with conflicts primarily from her own resources. This explains Mary's attraction to the 'bad' girl characters Bea (*Tenko*) and Vivian (*Pretty Woman*), which enable her to make contact with her own bad girl bits which cannot be articulated, because they were completely unacceptable to her parents.

In this chapter I have given some examples of intensive emotional experiences associated with textual moments. It has been shown that patterns of identification are shaped by life experiences which are unique to particular families, but, at the same time, families exist in a hierarchically and discursively ordered social world that places limits on the individual. I have looked at the mnemonic features of texts as evocative and aleatory objects and shown how viewers use the text to articulate past and present concerns and difficulties associated with moments of identity in transition.

This chapter features two working class women whose life pattern follows that of many women born in the early 1960s. They have chosen motherhood and family life

over career but this choice would not have been clear cut as opportunities for women to combine both were limited in the 1970s. Evidence was presented for the way these life choices are experienced psychically and socially in complex forms of identification with textual moments, characters and narrative, in particular the ways in which the arrival of siblings, with the accompanying traumas associated with sexuality and the social and psychic consequences that follow these were experienced. This challenges the central position occupied by the Oedipus complex in film theory and suggests an extension to include the Oedipal configuration. It also points to the use of researching motherhood and textual identification further. The next chapter continues with the theme of identification building on it by looking in more depth at object use through an examination of the viewing practices of two creative and active viewers, Daniel and Sophie.

CHAPTER FIVE VIEWING AND REPETITION

5.1 Introduction

Film and television theory has often been concerned with the 'pleasures' of the text. Traditionally viewing is associated with relaxation and leisure because of the nature of television as a domestic medium where the home is usually in opposition to work. As Chapter One explained, the domestic space has been subject to much media research and, to risk oversimplifying this, ethnographic research has in varying degrees engaged with the audience as 'active'. This chapter is going to enter these debates to evaluate the effectiveness of a psycho-social approach to themes and debates concerning pleasures and active audiences. In particular the chapter focuses on repeated viewings and practices.

Chapter Two suggested that special or significant texts could be viewed as examples of what Bollas has called 'evocative objects' (1992): objects that are complex and not easily defined. The aim of this chapter is to elaborate understanding of texts and viewing as particular types of evocative objects. For Bollas, evocative objects are distinguished by the way in which they contribute to psychic growth and creative living. Evocative objects are not static as they stimulate 'use'. For this reason a text cannot be 'read' or analysed as a singular bounded object, it is something that is put to use. Chapter Two outlined some of the ways objects stimulate subjects. Some objects work on the senses: sight, smell and touch. This relates to the structural specificity of the object or its use value. Interesting questions are raised about the structural or use value of spectatorship and viewing, as films and entertainment television, are designed to cause emotional response and work in the arena of 'meaning making'. Aleatory moments stimulate when something of the nature of an object takes us by surprise and evocative objects often have mnemonic features as they evoke past experiences as seen in the previous chapter. Where texts are concerned it is rarely the whole text that is evocative. Usually one or two specific moments intensively 'stimulate' the viewer and it is this stimulation that leads the text to become an evocative object with the power to transform the subject as discussed below.

This chapter focuses on two people who on the surface seem to conform to two prominent but negative social stereotypes: the 'shopaholic' and the 'couch potato'. In established psychoanalytic literature on culture both would be seen as negative, passive responses to commodity fetishism, which holds out the promise of the satisfaction of unbridled desire, something that is woven into the fabric of late 20th century capitalism. Media and cultural studies theorists have challenged the negative associations accompanying such images and this was an important political intervention (see Miller, 2002). However this has resulted in what for McGuigan (1992) is a worrying trend which views consumption and intensive media absorption as resistance to the effects of differential social hierarchies, where active consumption and alternative readings of texts are celebrated (see Fiske, 1989a, 1989b, 1992).

Sophie and Daniel appear to be active and creative viewers. They are examples of the reflexive individualised consumers and viewers noted by Beck (1992). Both use viewing in response to difficult issues associated with 'work'. They have a number of what seem to be evocative texts that they return to, but their viewing must be located in wider patterns of object use and forms of identification. They are presented together because their use of texts and viewing is inextricably linked to ways which structure and support the self that without these practices self-existence and identity would be threatened.

On first appearance these two case studies present examples of audiences whose text selection and viewing styles hold out the *potential* of being transformative, particularly in relation to trauma and other biographical life events. However both cases will demonstrate that creativity can break down and object use become conservative and binding to trauma. I will show how techniques adopted for emotional survival can have a mixture of progressive and conservative outcomes. To understand this it is necessary to begin by exploring some perspectives on object use and creativity. This chapter introduces important methodological questions concerning unconscious communication and evidence. In both interviews I experienced shifts in rhythm and mood as they told me about their viewing and everyday life. These differing moods are also linked to their responses to individual texts.

5.2 Object use and creative living

Evocative objects are associated with processes involved in the development of 'psychic genera', sensed psychic structures that are the result of spontaneity and 'growth' (Bollas, 1992). Bollas (1992) alerts us to the psychic potential of the object to 'transform'. Building on Winnicott and the importance he placed on the creative use of subjective and transitional objects, Bollas links object use to creative living, which is both part of everyday psychic experience and is necessary for survival and growth. Object selection for Bollas,³⁶ is a form of evidence, which articulates something about the subject's self-experience. Particular text selections and viewing styles are examples of the ways in which the self 'speaks'. They carry a history and bear the marks of parental provision and internal object relations. Significantly Bollas argues that 'the decision to use an object rests with the unconscious aims of the person' (1992:36). I would add that although Bollas is aware that all activities operate in different 'hermeneutic spaces', pointing to the way activities carry social meanings, he prioritises the unconscious at the expense of understanding the way that the social also *limits* the possibilities for object selection. No matter how much a person may crave the experience of a live opera for example, if that person cannot afford the high ticket price, or lives in a rural non-cosmopolitan area, they will not be able to fulfil this desire. Opera, of course, also carries a series of wider social and cultural meanings and, as Bourdieu shows, our tastes are not formed spontaneously but are shaped by socialisation processes, class

³⁶ It is possible to see similarities between his discussion with Bourdieu's account of 'taste' although Bollas does not theorise object selection as taste.

and gender in particular. However, these are not extraneous to an emphasis on the unconscious as they pass through it.

Bollas (1992) develops Winnicott's (1971) ideas on the use of objects in creativity focussing on spontaneous object use and the resultant sense of 'aliveness' which allows the individual to create psychic meaning and to become 'a person living and taking part in the world' (Winnicott, 1971:191). It is also possible to think of this as an example of psychic 'bricolage'. This idea is borrowed from and describes the way individuals 'use' whatever is at hand. For Bollas (1992) once an object such as a text, or an activity such as watching television has been selected for use the unconscious begins the work of employing the object subjectively. Mann (2002:58) explains, 'these various objects of usages are not simply a static or dynamic representation; each object represents a different link by which the subject employs the object and in doing so the subject defines and extends itself'. The psychic structures generated through creative living promote the ability to withstand trauma and assist in reparation throughout life.

In infancy the mother is a 'transformative object' (Bollas, 1988) as she changes the environment for the child. Over time the infant learns to transform its own environment following these earliest experiences something is carried over. Mann (2002:60) argues that throughout life individuals long 'for the ability to submit to objects that will change the subject's self-experience. Whenever we encounter 'objects' there is always an unconscious need to 'personalise it and endow it with our own subjectivity (Grotstein, 2002).

Where the engagement with reality is generative subjects undertake unconscious work on a variety of issues, but with the aim of re-envisioning reality and 'in turn sponsor new ways of living and thinking' (Bollas, 1992:70). So for Winnicott and Bollas, variety, change and the Lacanian idea of *jouissance* are the marks of generative, creative and transformative living, and all objects hold out this potential transformative function, provided the subject brings this to life in generative use. This is the mark of an evocative object. However this must be qualified. Genera can also be 'born of conflict', promoting 'emotional turbulence' (1992:79) and, although the end result may be positive, the process is never conflict free as this chapter shows.

Whilst object use can be transformative, generative and progressive, it can also be conservative (Bollas, 1992, 1995; Mann 2002). Conservative objects and object use oppose the potential of evocative object use. Certain objects are revisited which 'contain' and preserve intact, static, usually difficult, being states from childhood when the child lacks the developmental capacity to understand the situation fully. Conservative objects share similar features to repetition scenarios. This often presents as 'mood' and the difficult feelings generated do not relate to the present. Conservative object use can develop in response to trauma, making it defensive to

minimize or desensitise further pain. Bollas draws on Bion and points to the –K function (described in Chapter Three) where the object is employed to 'not-know' and to evacuate the linking function. Persistent mood then, is characteristic of conservative object use. The subject may seek out objects and experiences which they know to be negative in an attempt to work over the difficulty, or in trauma certain repetitive practices may be organised to close-down creative play (Bollas, 1992:79). There is also a lack of variety via repetition, the person surrounding the self with a restricted colony of objects and experiences. So it is important to explore what the work of repetition does for the subject and this can help distinguish creative and generative living from conservative object use.

It is now appropriate to explore the case study examples. As explained in psycho-social research the researcher is alert to forms of unconscious communication and utilises their own emotional responses to the interview and data. Both my pen portraits are informed by my strong emotional responses to the interviews. The setting in which the interview takes place is also important, not only because it provides important social clues which helped me make sense of the data, but also because the environment is used consciously and unconsciously as a vehicle through which the subject articulates him/ herself. Acknowledging the dynamics of the interview location can also extend our thinking about the home and the domestic environment. Through the environment the participant articulates desires, particular needs or psychological issues (Mann, 2002; Bollas, 1995, 1992, 1987). Certain behaviours, including forms of object selection and use, are unconsciously adopted for positive and transformative purposes. On the other hand they can be used to help minimise mental anxiety and pain. Even in seemingly pleasurable situations, unacceptable and unwanted feelings and behaviours 'creep in by the back door' (Malan, 1995:5) and reinforce established emotional conflict. This chapter explores the way particular texts and viewing practices are used repetitively not only as potentially transformative but also defensively.

5.2 Part I: Introducing Sophie

Sophie is 30 and recently married. She works in administration for a public service provider and has done this work since leaving school. The couple live in a pleasant two bedroom flat in a large town. Sophie had a great deal of instability to contend with throughout her childhood. Her father left the family to have a relationship with another woman when she was aged six. He continued to return and then leave the family throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Sophie's parents have divorced and re-married twice and Sophie feels her mother has prioritised the relationship with Sophie's father over her. At the time of the interviews Sophie's parents were preparing to leave her again this time to live in Australia. Viewing for Sophie was associated with emotional and economic stability. Her only happy memory from her pre-teen years is of the family watching *The Muppet Show* on television together before her father left. She uses a religious idea to tell me she has recently 'resurrected' from the dead her Muppet interest in the anticipation of creating a room for a baby. I will show that this is an apt choice of word as it operates

symbolically as a way of linking back new life to a moment when her old, secure life ended abruptly.

Following her father's departure, Sophie, her mother and brother ended up sharing one room at her grandparent's home. Divorce is a common risk women and families face as it is the 'trap-door' through which 'women fall into the new poverty' (Beck, 1992:89). She was also devastated at the loss of the family's dog and later this became a point of identification with Dorothy in *The Wizard Of Oz*. The overwhelming emotional responses to her father's continual abandonment of the family, and what she sees as parental selfishness, have resulted in Sophie's strong and painful attachments to texts and practices, such as collecting soft toys, which are explored below. The social consequences of this abandonment were articulated through a discourse of 'normality' in the interviews. This 'normality' takes a particular suburban lower-middle class form of an *economically* secure lifestyle:

Like I don't know if my Mum and Dad hadn't separated if we would be very different. We were very 2.4 children, new cars and all that and it was different ... We weren't rich or anything but kind of middle class, ok, doin' ok for yourself. [] We had a pond.

There were other social costs associated with their changing family structure at that time:

I guess because we *were a normal family when my Dad left*. And we were living with my Grandma and Grandpa and it was still quite unusual at that time. There weren't *that many* people that were not living with their Mum and Dad. I know it's much more common now, but I don't remember it being that common *then*.

The family never recovered financially and when her parents eventually got back together her father's career had taken a downturn and the family could only afford to purchase a 'run-down' ex-council house where they lived until recently.

Sophie identifies the 1980s when she was a teenager, as a really important time for her. In response to her family difficulties she made good friends at the local comprehensive school, and this offered her some stability. Friendships became important at this time and have remained so. She started to like music and groups, television programmes (90210) and films. It was also the decade that she discovered, via the *Back To The Future* films "1950s America", which developed over time into an important fantasy space for Sophie.

Often Sophie retreated to her bedroom which became a refuge as things were "not particularly good" because of:

Family. Mum and Dad. Dad was there. Then not there. Back again. Then not there again. I was looking for something that was a bit more consistent. You can't really change things that are beyond your control.

Objects were used to help her gain stability (Zittoun, 2006). The combination of popular culture, her bedroom filled with posters and music, and her friendships helped her cope. She also found stability through her Grandpa who was “more like my Dad, stable and more there”. Unfortunately he died suddenly and traumatically at the age of sixty. At the time of the interviews her Grandma had also recently died and, coupled with her parents’ imminent departure, it was clear that Sophie continues to face loss.

Chapter Three explained the concept of transference as a form of unconscious communication understood relationally. Feelings and affect ‘circulate’ (Redman, 2009:60) between interviewer and interviewee; it is not necessary to take the position that feelings ‘originate’ or are ‘contained within one individual’ (Campbell in Redman, 2009). If we assume unconscious communication to be achieved through projective identification, then we can also assume, that my responses to interviewees are furnished by my identifications subjective imprint. This however is part of a process of communication in which both parties engage and from which conscious and unconscious communication can be taken and used as resources.

Bollas has explained the importance of persistent ‘mood’. Sophie explains that she often struggles with difficult feelings (see below). My own experience of loss allowed me to identify with Sophie’s and this experience explains my identification with feelings of sadness in relation to Sophie. I also experienced excitement and joy when she spoke about some of her ‘objects’, which she uses to try and *change* her mood. Adorning the walls are what I would describe as ‘optimistic objects’; bright colourful ‘fun objects. I found Sophie immensely likeable. She is friendly, chatty and has lots of friends and it is easy to see why. She has a child-like quality about her with her dark hair and pigtails, looking remarkably similar to one of her icons ‘Dorothy’ in *The Wizard of Oz*. This childlike response to texts is seen in her tastes, as she loves everything Disney. Her home is amazing as it is full of what she calls “stuff”, from walls adorned with Disney prints and signed film posters, to a kitchen full of mass manufactured knick-knacks, “bits” or keepsakes, coffee jars, humorous signs with a 1950s feel, Elvis ornaments, Disney mugs. It is impossible to see the fridge as it is covered in decorative magnets. She has a room crammed full of dolls (Disney and themed Barbie dolls), teddy bears and ‘Beanie Bears’. Her bedroom is overflowing with designer label clothes and shoes (she visits the USA every year to shop for clothes), as well as hundreds of Disney items. The bedroom is themed in an African style like *The Lion King*, a favourite film that always makes Sophie cry and also represents a connection to her grandparents who served in Africa in the forces.

Sophie is puzzled by the fact that most of her favourite films and programmes make her feel sad or even make her cry each time she views them. Despite knowing this she often finds herself making space, by taking time off work for instance, to view a DVD/video of a text that she knows will “upset me”. She explains:

I'm not really sure why I put myself through it. You wouldn't really wanna do something that was gonna make you feel sad purposely but sometimes you do watch things to make you feel sad.

This is a key conundrum for Sophie that needs to be explained. Taking sick time off work and feeling bad are linked together throughout her interviews. Sophie would frequently switch from speaking about her 'stuff' and films to 'work' and how much she hates the job and the majority of the people that she works with. Her dream job would be creative working as an animator. Sophie's reality however is that she must work for economic survival. Work is a nasty activity for Sophie but she must endure this if she is to make her annual trip to America and be able to purchase her treasured objects.

5.3 Survival strategies: Friendship texts, consumption and the 1980s. ***Friends*, *90210*, *Back To The Future*, *Wizard of Oz*³⁷**

This section explores some of the ways Sophie has responded to the difficult events of her childhood with particular reference to texts and viewing. Sophie *consumes*. It is important to understand this consumption as a coping mechanism with the aim of giving Sophie emotional control. This began in her teenage years but increased as she reached her twenties when she attained a degree of economic independence. One would presume a film like *The Wizard of Oz* would become a favourite in childhood. Although Sophie saw it as a child, it did not have any impact on her until she discovered it again in her twenties when she was "able to go out and buy it". She has since added to it with a series of 'Oz collectables'. I will explore this later as a form of afterwardsness. Similarly it would be reasonable to expect a love of Disney films to begin in childhood but for Sophie it is the recent Disney films that she encountered in her twenties such as *Lion King* and *Toy Story* and *Toy Story II*, that are most powerful for her.

Sophie frequently returns to the Disney texts, 'Oz' and *Back To The Future*, in memory or for viewing sessions. These texts are linked because each in its own way reinforces survival strategies that Sophie adopted in her teenage years and in early adulthood. They provide external representations (used internally also) of psychic processes, her traumatic experiences around attachment, and forms of anxiety management. 'Teenage texts' are important to both interviewees as it was at this time they adopted practices that were to continue into adult life (see section 5.8 on *Twin Peaks*). Zittoun (2006) argues that in time of upheaval such as leaving home, gathering 'symbolic resources' such as familiar things is an important way identity can be stabilised. Sophie identifies with specific narrative scenarios and also attempts in phantasy to address her situation. They confirm some of her strategies, particularly her ability to make substitute families to compensate for the failings of her own family. They also point to a key problem she faces as a working class woman: financial stability.

³⁷ *Friends* created and produced by David Crane and Marta Kauffman Warner Bros Television USA 1994-2004. *90210* Created by Darren Star 1990-2000 Fox USA, *Back to the Future* 1985 Dir Robert Zemeckis USA, *The Wizard of Oz* 1939 Dir Victor Fleming USA

Back To The Future and *The Wizard of Oz* are important texts because they take Sophie to “another time and another place” away from “current things”. They also facilitate a change of *mood*. In the case of the former film, the idea of time travel was appealing and introduced Sophie to the fantasy space of 1950s USA. Sophie explains in strikingly psycho-social terms:

It goes back to 50s America and that's where I would like to be []. It just seemed things were more carefree. I want to be a bit more chilled out about things and the 50s takes it back. After school, going out dancing, playing a jukebox. It just seems like that's not how I am but how I would like to be, more chilled out. But society and my life doesn't allow that.

Lacey (1999) examined the location of America as a ‘fantasy space’ in post war discourses. She found that in 1950's Britain America was experienced as a structure of feeling linked to signifiers of ‘possibility, affluence, escape and transformation’. For many working class women in the 1950s, the dream of owning material goods and living a more affluent lifestyle, as seen in American movies, was experienced in situations of material deprivation. Sophie has not experienced the 1950s, but she has experienced a change in her economic and emotional security at a time when a growth in materialism and increased affluence for some working class people was accelerated in Britain under the Thatcher governments of the 1980s, a crucial time for Sophie, where she was struggling to find ways to cope and survive. A feature of the structure of feeling associated with the Thatcher years was that it was possible and desirable for all to have an abundance of material goods. Having material goods became one of the ways in which identity was constructed and expressed.

The possession of material goods also became a marker of individual success. Prior to her father leaving, Sophie's memory/ fantasy was that the family was part of a nouveau-riche class; financial hardship has been a reality that coincided with her experience of rejection and emotional abandonment. This explains the very clear statement that society and her life do not allow her to feel carefree or happy. Beck (1992) and Beck Gernsheim (2001) note that the flexible labour market's impact on women in particular means that the prospect of not working even after marriage and children is not realistic for most. Sophie has a relatively secure job that she hates but feels she cannot leave. Sophie fantasies about a material security associated with the 1950's that, in turn, allow her *mood* to improve. What is striking about the next extract is that for Sophie access to a new and carefree feeling is accessed through material objects:

If I ever get my 50s jukebox I'm gonna put all my 80s records on it. I could put my juke box on maybe I'd be tempted to dance around with the duster and be a bit more spontaneous. Eventually I would like to have a 50's themed kitchen with a jukebox in it and 50s dining chairs.

Sophie can capture the pain of the 1980s and place it the safe fantasy space of the objects of the 1950s. This suggests she is using the objects projectively, and

symbolically (Bollas, 1992:34) placing difficult or hopeful bits of the self into the object for safekeeping or containment. She is also open to the symbolic ability of the 1950s to key into a range of positive signifiers such as those Lacey describes. Sophie unites her survival objects (records) with this safe and psychically productive ph/fantasy space.

It is significant that the time travelling associated with *Back To The Future* takes Sophie to a time prior to her existence. In Oedipal terms the film is interesting because it addresses origins; the lead character is involved in a romantic relationship with his mother. More significant is the fact that the lead character's parents' marriage is in trouble and it is his actions and interventions in the past that remedy the problems. Sophie is clear that in 1985 when the film was set things were "not that stable". I don't think my father was around in '85, I can't remember". This form of defensive amnesia occurs throughout the interviews where Sophie's father is concerned.

Friends, *90210* and *The Wizard of Oz* are united by the themes of friendship and surrogate families. In all three texts there is displacement from secure situations and the emergence of alternative family units including extended family and friendship groups. Sophie has experience of both. Rustin and Rustin's (2001) collection *Narratives of Love and loss* show children's fiction is compelling as it directly addresses trauma such as abandonment, separation and loss. *The Wizard of Oz* is an example of a text which addresses such trauma. Time travelling texts and *The Wizard of Oz* can be explained through the concept of afterwardsness, a theory of memory, where past experience is reinterpreted in the light of other experiences. When Sophie saw the film as a child, it seems she could not identify with the traumatic content of the text and she only vaguely remembers watching it. It was only on viewing again, retrospectively as an adult, that the narrative and imagery become evocative in the light of her own experiences of abandonment and her survival techniques and responses. However it is possible to see the evocative and transformative nature of the film as an object put to 'work'. 'Dorothy is introjected and is also used projectively: she is like Sophie, a teenager who survives. Here is an example of the work Sophie has done with the text to address childhood distress at "not being old enough to fight for" the family dog when her father left, and living with her grandparents during her father's frequent departures:

At the beginning of the film she is running away because they are going to take her dog, they are going to take away that which is most important to her. She's got lots of friends. She's not with her parents in the beginning but she goes and finds other people and they're becoming like a substitute family. She goes and makes friends and they're funny and she's got her family around. That probably reflects what I had to do myself. I have lots of different people that I turn to for different things.

Although these texts (with the exception of *90210*) are texts of Sophie's twenties they confirm strategies that began in Sophie's teenage years. However strategies of consumerism reinforce economic frustrations Sophie continually feels. She spent

a lot of time in the interviews explaining how she hates work and feels trapped by the need to earn money. She would like to change jobs but cannot leave work to re-train. She begins by explaining that all her films and programmes "have a friendship thing" and *Friends* and *90210* have "glamorous" characters. However this causes some ambivalent responses to favourite texts that often make Sophie feel uncomfortable. *Friends* is an important show because "there's not much family going on in that and like they're out on their own and they appear to be having nicer lives than the life I've got". Also she liked *90210* "because that's the kind of life I would have liked to lead. Lots more money but it's a privileged life living off the back of your parents. My life is completely the opposite my parents have never given me anything". Emotions and material are fused and this leads directly into a particular kind of object use. Being given things is very important. Sophie explains that she "fights" for 'things', and "things" and "stuff" represent relationships.

5.4 Forms of object use

As a teenager Sophie found refuge in her room and filled it with "things", which were more "reliable" than her parents. Her flat is an extension of this as her home and possessions mean "everything" to her. Sophie tells me about her love of merchandise relating to films or programmes she likes. She has a large collection of porcelain *Wizard Of Oz* figures, Barbie dolls, Disney merchandise (*Toy Story* in particular) and 'Beanie Bears'. She was once featured in a tabloid newspaper and has appeared in women's weekly magazines gaining recognition for her collection of *Toy Story* merchandise and she proudly displays the pictures in a frame. Her objects have helped make her special and less ordinary. This points to Fiske's notion of fan consumption constituting an alternative form of cultural capital (1989b, 1992). Collectables however are also very expensive and can have high economic exchange value, blurring the boundaries of cultural capital that Bourdieu outlined. This alternative cultural and economic value is a narrative theme of the *Toy Story* films. Exploring *Toy Story* and *Toy Story II*³⁸ we can understand more about Sophie's relationship to things and the appeal of merchandising. In reply to my question about Disney she said, "I always like the animation side of things but I also like the merchandising side, but especially *Toy Story* because they were toys so the merchandising was better than for anything else".

Wasko (2001) would describe Sophie as a 'Disneyphile' who incorporates Disney merchandise into her home and family as well as taking part in 'Disneyana', the buying and selling of Disney merchandise. Brands provide "a symbolic means of connecting a wide range of commodities to an emotional content, which creates the desire within consumers to purchase those products" (Jordan, 2008:19). I would add that when a connection with a brand has a biographical and experiential significance this creates a less transient relationship than that usually associated with consumer capitalism. Disney narratives have particular appeal to children through conscious and unconscious fantasies and imagination. Wasko (2001) suggests that the link with Disney is made in childhood and every encounter with a Disney product carries

³⁸ *Toy Story I* 1995 and *Toy Story II* 1999 Dir John Lasseter Disney/Pixar USA

an 'aura' that links the adult back to childhood, explaining why Disney retains a special place in childhood memories. Conversely Sophie's link to Disney is a much more recent phenomenon and it is the recently produced films that have become powerful for her. There is evidence then to support both Jordan and Wasko's arguments. Sophie's complex object use can be understood effectively by thinking about the role played by biographical events and trauma in object selection and use.

Both *Toy Story* movies are set in an evocative location: a child's bedroom in a suburban middle class American home, reminiscent of the phantasy home Sophie 'lost' when her father left. The *Toy Story* films are particularly appealing because the narratives both invoke separation, and the importance of friendships and the emotional versus 'economic' and cultural 'value' of toys as 'collectables'. The pivotal narrative quest in both films is to return to the safe haven of a child's bedroom'. Sophie discusses a scene concerned with abandonment that she finds highly emotional and makes her cry. Cowgirl doll Jessie tells Woody that his faith in owner and 'parent' Andy, as someone who will always love him, is misplaced. The story is told in flashback montage, which Radstone (2000) asserts operates in similar ways to the visual features of memory. This scene is accompanied by the moving song, *When She Loved Me*:

I cry even when she's³⁹ under the bed and it's all changing. And the girl is changing all the stuff. Putting posters up and nail varnish. She looks out really expectantly. She thinks she's gonna pull her out and love her again. And what it's done for me is that I'm incredibly sentimental about things. Like that teddy bear [points] sitting up there is [husband's] teddy bear and he's had it since he was a baby. And we had his head professionally sewn back on. And I would *never* move him. Like he's *never* gonna go in the loft. I'd never put him away. And I'm really sentimental about things I've had from my childhood. And things that my Grandma has given me. Even hair straighteners she bought me that don't even work. I'm too sentimental with things probably.

Like I had hundreds of Beanies in that room. And because of the size of the flat and when we were decorating we just had to get rid of them. And *every single one* of those Beanies told a story. And I was *gutted* putting them in a bin bag. It was *breaking my heart*. I remember where I bought them, what I was doing, what holiday I was on. And I guess because of '*Toy Story*' I think they all come alive at night and they're up there⁴⁰ chatting about what a cow I am putting them in a bin liner.

Toys, therefore have a secret; they come to life when no one is around. This illusion suggests transitional object use which is generally associated with a *single* much loved object, chosen by the child and used to minimise separation anxiety as it

³⁹ It is the doll Jessie who is under the bed and she watches the little girl who loved and played with her change into a teenager. Eventually the owner pulls her out but only to place her in a bag of unwanted goods that she then gives to a charity shop.

⁴⁰ In the loft.

symbolises the mother's presence in her absence and reassures the child that she will return (Winnicott, 1971). The object also has to be able to tolerate and survive 'damage'. Clearly Sophie both chooses and deeply loves her objects (including films). However the sheer volume of objects and the fact she is unable to discard objects, feeling disturbed at the thought as this will 'hurt' them, suggests that Sophie struggles with the separation between illusion and reality. Sophie's objects therefore cannot be thought of as transitional in the traditional sense, suggesting that other processes are taking place.

If an object has been given to Sophie by a person she cared for, hair straighteners for example, the care symbolically resides in the object, so to return to the object is to connect with whatever was positive about this relationship and below I will also discuss this as a feature of mourning. Sophie believes the toys are 'real' but they are real in that they contain bits of Sophie and her experience.

Sophie explains she identifies with the toys and has projected herself into the story ("I'm in the story"). Symbolically toys connect adults with childhood. The toys in the story are the kind a child of six to eight years of age would have and this was the age when Sophie faced so much upheaval, so are linked to her own childhood experience of abandonment. When Sophie feels bad because she puts the bears in her loft this is not out of concern for their feelings; it is because she has projected her own feelings and experiences into each toy and *she* knows how it feels to be abandoned. Sophie explains that the scene involves change and she follows this by explaining about the Teddy that will 'never' go into the loft even though reality forces her to accept that some of her bears will have to.

This scene evokes a series of processes from infancy such as the move from 'subjective' to 'objective' perception. Objective objects are outside the area of projection (Winnicott, 1971, 1990) and clearly soft toys and their 'use value' (Bollas, 1992), receptacles for forms of identification around attachment, safety and intimacy for instance makes them very much inside this area. Subjective objects may have various meanings but primarily they do not have to encounter the limits that a more objective relationship to reality would afford. In part this illustrates processes described by Bollas (1987, 1988, 1992) where self-states that are difficult and painful are stored, in this case abandonment. They are returned to through processes of repetition for the work of change.

The characteristic of the transitional object is that it is used in creative play in the area *between* fantasy and reality. The creative adult or infant does not get stuck in either fantasy or reality. Putting the bears in the loft forces her to confront the historical reality of her abandonment and explains why parting with objects is too painful. Usually she holds onto objects in an adhesive attachment sense, perhaps fuelled by phantasies that avoid confronting the reality of separation. It is these features that appear in Sophie's repetition scenarios from *Toy Story II* and *Castaway*⁴¹ discussed below. It is not just the films that Sophie returns to as

⁴¹ 2000 Dir Robert Zemeckis 20th Century Fox USA

merchandising means she can physically connect with the films. This is in keeping with the repetitive and binding work of conservative object use in response to the trauma of loss.

5.5 Mourning and Repetition

It is plausible to also think of Sophie's object use in relation to Volkan's theory of 'linking objects' (1972) as well as a feature of repetition compulsion. 'Linking objects' are inanimate objects, which are used by 'pathological mourners' (Volkan, 1972:215). They are adopted when mourning for an object has failed and where the subject has an ambivalent relationship with the lost object, like Sophie with her parents. This shares features with repetition compulsion generally associated with the failure of mourning. The fact that Sophie's father, when he eventually came home, was close to death then recovered, is further complicated for Sophie by the fact that her parents are still alive but continue processes of abandonment. 'Linking objects' symbolically represent the lost object. As the earlier extract concerning her father being 'there' and 'not there' suggests the *fort da* game described by Lacan to explain the way a representation can fill the gap caused by absence.

Volkan states that object use in mourning usually presents in a person who, like Sophie, has an awareness of an investment in the object but lacks an awareness of 'what was being symbolized' (Volkan, 1972:16). So we can see one aspect of her object use as a response to grief and loss in relation to abandonment. Attempts are made to introject the object, which is for Sophie inherently good and potentially 'transformative', with the aim of reuniting with what has been lost. Conversely there is also projection where 'the object itself is evidence of the externalisation of what is painful - the work of mourning and persistence of the external object relationship' (Volkan, 1972:16). Volkan argues for the expansion of the concept of transitional object because it is associated with reality testing and the differentiation between present and potential danger, particularly where anxiety is generated by the absence of the mother. Sophie's interviews are replete with mentions of parents who were "there" and "not there" for her emotionally or practically and have "never given" her "a thing", as a child or as an adult. Hurvich (1989) also focuses on the experience of separation anxiety, especially on the aspect of the child's lack of control. Anxiety is generated by situations that stimulate memories of earlier states of helplessness. 'Signal anxiety' is a form of anxiety whose source is the anticipation of being in a traumatic situation 'which is a recognised, remembered and expected situation of helplessness' (1989:309). Associated fears include fear of the loss of the object and loss of love. So, unlike the aleatory moments with powerful mnemonic aspects seen in the previous chapter, the scene in *Toy Story II* can be viewed as both a signal anxiety scenario and also a repetition of the trauma of abandonment.

There are other examples of film scenes as repetition scenarios. Sophie tells me there is a scene in *The Lion King* that is “not for children” because it is so traumatic. A lion cub finds his father’s dead body and touches it to see if it is alive. Narratives and visual scenes such as this that confront the child with helplessness associated with the loss of a parent are found in numerous Disney films. Ultimately the child faces threat and danger but always survives. Such a scenario in real life will not confront most children, but Sophie had the experience of seeing her grandfather collapse and later die, as well as witnessing her father have a heart attack. Texts such as *The Lion King* for Sophie are also ‘signal anxiety’ texts associated with helplessness and loss that had a wider resonance in her life.

In Chapter Four I argued that film and television moments provide raw sensory data for alpha functioning to allow us to mentalise and develop unconscious knowledge; what Bollas calls ‘unthought known’ (1992). Film and television moments provide exceptionally rich material for repetition scenarios. Repetition compulsions are mental scenarios created to ‘represent the internalisation of traumas and disappointments experienced by the child’ from interactions with ‘primary attachment figures’ and, once created, ‘are incredibly resistant to change’ (Layton, 2004:38) and for this reason they are lived as character. Layton explains that ‘to mourn requires a kind of re-contextualising that is both painful and goes against the grain of common sense. The resistance to mourning produces a repetition compulsion. [] As frustrating as that repetition can be, therein lies the hope for change, because each repetition is a little different’ (Layton, 2002b:7). It is this aspect that marks some returns to texts, as repetition scenarios. Visual media repetition scenarios involve a process that begins with an aleatory moment when the text halts and hails the subject. This can occur as a result of memory refigured in the process of afterwardsness. These aleatory moments stimulate memory, so that the objects will be singled out for new uses such as symbolic associations and the projection of self-states.

Castaway is less a signal anxiety text and is an example of what I will call a ‘mourning text’, which contains within the text a visual representation of a repetition scenario. O’Shaughnessey (1994) argues that ‘readings’ of texts are compromised when the viewer brings their emotional experiences to the text. It is still possible to observe the ‘preferred’ or ‘dominant’ reading of the text but when the viewer reads from the position of painful emotional experiences their response will be in excess of anything that can reasonably be read from the text alone.

Sophie described a “horrific” and “traumatic” scene that always makes her cry “a lot”. As we watched the scene together instantly Sophie started to cry: “See I told you it always makes me cry”. While films are designed to elicit emotional responses from the viewer Sophie’s response on every viewing is not typical of the response one would reasonably expect to see.⁴² The narrative concerns Federal-Express employee, Chuck. On a work mission his plane crashes and he finds himself the only survivor, stranded on a desert island. He is forced to learn to survive. He finds a

⁴² I researched the Internet for responses to the scene in question and found unanimous agreement that the scene was not traumatic, but rather ‘silly’.

number of Fed-Ex parcels washed up on the beach and they play a crucial part in his survival. He opens up the packages and uses the cardboard for shoes and shelter. He opens another and finds a skating boot and uses the blade to make an axe. He keeps one package unopened and promises himself he will eventually deliver it. This, and a photograph of his girlfriend, act as incentives to survive. Amongst these objects he finds a *Wilson* volleyball (see image of 'Wilson' below).

Chuck has blood on his hands when he picks up the ball and his handprints make a face on the ball. He begins communicating with the ball and uses grass to give him hair. The ball becomes a friend / family substitute that helps Chuck maintain his sanity. Eventually he manages to build a raft to leave the island and he sets off with Wilson on board. A large wave causes the ball to become dislodged and he loses him. At this moment the viewer sees Chuck's distress at losing Wilson and it is this moment that causes Sophie such distress. As we watch together she says, "this is horrific [] traumatic [] "Shocking, shocking, poor Wilson and it's just a ball. And he buys himself another 'Wilson' in the end. And he has another volleyball sat next to him. That was his person and he *had* to make himself a friend".



'Wilson'

Clearly Sophie identifies with Chuck's use of objects to survive emotionally, she says:

It's so sad 'cause that's his buddy and he made it out of a shitty old ball. It's more than just a ball. People can't understand it because it's more than just a ball. Because I'm very attached to material objects as well. I'm not materialistic but I guess that's why I've got so much stuff in my house, because I feel there's hardly anything I can get rid of. I just get ridiculously attached to things. It was everything to him, his friend and his pet.

Sophie firmly holds on to her objects. Whilst people can go away, objects generally remain; however, in this scene the treasured object goes away.

There is a crucial piece of information that illuminates Sophie's response and accounts for the aleatory power of this moment: her maiden name was Wilson⁴³. Sophie abruptly dismissed this as unimportant when I asked her about it but I sensed her defensiveness: it is unlikely that this personal significance would be of no consequence. Initially I wondered if the ball represented her grandfather or father. However, if we think about the nature of a repetition scenario, which contains both the trauma, and some sense of the perceived solution, then this scene contains both aspects. Sophie's experiences of loss are contained in this moment, but also her survival strategies, making objects into friends, pets, and using them for emotional support. As noted this can also be applied to *Toy Story*; there are elements of identification with her relationships with her grandfather and father as she looked for "stability" in objects. Earlier she explained: "when I was young and Dad went, he went away for what felt like *years before I saw him again*". Perhaps it had been a childhood fantasy that her father was trapped on a desert island and would one day return and it was this rather than his lack of love for Sophie that prevented his return. This idea, that the parent has not abandoned the child and that there is something preventing the parent from being with the child is common in children's literature (Rustin & Rustin 2001). However it is also possible to view her response as a feature of afterwardsness and her experience of going away and returning.

Sophie's trauma has emotional, economic and social features, as she encountered loss at a young age against the backdrop of a social world where consumption and the possession of 'things' was linked to identity, stability, fulfilment and security. Clearly these are not separate features: economic hardship is emotionally experienced in such a way that it has traumatising effects for Sophie. But for Sophie it has taken the form of a particularly exaggerated form of consumerism. Consumerism has been understood as a form of misrecognition (Zizek, 1989) or commodity fetishism which makes 'us defensively substitute the desire for *things* [my emphasis] for the desire for love, recognition and feelings of worth' (Layton, 2004:38). This is manipulated in by marketing strategies such as 'branding', which mask social relations and attribute power to 'things'. I would add that part of the

⁴³ I have written permission to use this information.

success of modern consumer capitalism has been its ability to connect with the potential experience of the transformative object. Equally individuals' emotional agendas drive particular forms of consumerism.

Although Bollas (1995) agrees that we can be open to the use function and value of an object in health, which includes projection into the object, continual projection depletes the self. Where trauma has occurred, the subject continually projects wants and needs into objects. Objects are the only potential sources of having needs met. The hope is for objects to 'contain' and do the difficult emotional work of the mother. This is the potential of a 'transformative object'; it is able to initiate change when the child cannot do it for itself. This process is doomed to failure because texts or other inanimate objects cannot do the emotional work of the primary relationships.

What are the features of this scene that make it a repetition scenario for Sophie? This scene addresses Sophie's responses and the 'solutions' she has adopted. Sophie's grief revolves, therefore, around fragility and the failure of her survival technique and of object use based on loss. This work of repetition ultimately becomes conservative object use because there is confusion where 'solution' is concerned. This could constitute the basis for an ideological and critical reading of the film as an endorsement of American consumer capitalism. This is supported by evidence seen in Sophie's sudden mood change, from grief to light-hearted optimism, when she tells me that when Chuck returns home he makes a fresh start by delivering the unopened parcel, (hence reinvesting in his role as a 'company' man), and drives away with a brand new Wilson ball that he has purchased as all mass produced objects are replaceable.

Sophie explains the story has a happy ending as he "buys himself another Wilson in the end" and confirms that she is always able to try to replace much-loved objects with others. She says: "I've got a merchandise Wilson in the other room. And I tried to make myself one out of a ball". For Sophie this is perceived as an act of creativity a demonstration of her artistic ability, the "only thing she was good at" when she was at school. This is also why Sophie is able to convince herself she is not materialistic because consumption for her is crucial to her emotional survival but she experiences it as an expression of creativity. As long as she can purchase, she is alive emotionally and also in control in a way that was impossible for her as a child. This ultimately embeds her in processes that link her emotional survival to consumerism. The objects (films and toys) that are most special, however, are also symbolic features of her repetition compulsion.

Sophie's study also illuminates some of the emotional difficulties associated with the economic realities of capitalism, such as unemployment, which economically preclude Sophie from making any changes to her work situation which she "hates", such as re-training or being able to give up work once she has a child. It pays particular attention to the use of consumption and object use to address a central concern noted by Beck (1992:92) that in contemporary society there is a demand 'for the control of one's own money, time, living space and body'. As this case

illustrates, this 'control' is channelled and serves the demands of consumer capitalism. It also explains psycho-socially the ability of consumer capitalism to appear to be able to meet individual emotional needs and supply solutions to personal dilemmas and traumas.

Part II

5.7 Daniel: Filling Time

Daniel is thirty-six; he has two sisters six and eight years older. He is single and lives in his own home, a repossessed semi-detached which he was able to purchase cheaply. He lives very close to his parents and the area he grew up in. He has worked in insurance since leaving school and now manages an office with 10 employees. Daniel did not leave his parents' home until he was twenty-nine and this was done reluctantly but both parties felt it was not appropriate for him to live at home forever. He is single and has not had previous live-in partners although he says he has had girlfriends. He has male and female friends, mostly from work but increasingly sees less and less of his friends. He does not have any hobbies although he will go and occasionally watch football matches and cricket in the summer with his parents. In recent years he gave up his football season ticket and replaced live supporting with watching the game on television. Daniel likes films but rarely goes to the cinema, preferring to watch at home, because cinema is more "demanding" on his time. At home it is possible to turn a film off and at the cinema he is committed to observing spectatorship protocol and sitting through the film.

'Time' is a significant concept for Daniel. The interviews contain numerous examples of perpetual viewing as a means of filling up time. Daniel has favourites he returns to, including large numbers of films and programmes he has watched "ten times or more". He "gets absorbed" and "lost" in programmes and films he likes and he is open "to almost everything" and can always find something to absorb himself in. Daniel talks enthusiastically and in-depth about numerous texts, recalling the minutiae of everything from quiz shows to complex critically acclaimed films. Daniel paints a picture of his life structured around work, where he is indispensable, and home, where he is watching television:

Last Sunday I watched *Scream II* and *Scream III* and I was doing my ironing and that was what I planned for my Sunday. [] If I'm ever going to do my ironing I've got to have something I can watch". [] I haven't had more than a day's holiday off work in more than two years. It sounds really awful but if I'm away for longer than a day the office doesn't run smoothly. I haven't been on holiday and everyone at work is going "oh you gotta go on holiday". [] I do overtime on Saturdays. I normally leave for work at 6.30am and get home at 6.30pm. So the programmes I like to watch I think 'I'm gonna make sure I tape that'. A good film or television programme, whatever makes it

worth going to work. That's what you've treated yourself to do. You know you've tortured yourself for that many hours so you think 'right I'm gonna make the most of my viewing or reading time'.

Silverstone (1994) points to the constancy of television as an example of its transitional character and its comforting and anxiety reducing function, but this does not seem enough to account for the way Daniel has structured his life around work and viewing. Daniel's case study allows an opportunity to explore in depth the way personalising and time-shift technologies are used, how they are meaningful, and ways they fit into wider patterns in the viewer's life. New technologies such as *Sky Plus* allow the viewer to personalise their viewing. Once texts, genres or channels are selected the technology takes over. Unlike video the viewer no longer needs to worry about programming the technology to record as it does it automatically and the volume of recorded and stored material is massively increased. So Daniel can always find lots to view that he likes. I want to explore what purpose this viewing serves.

Leisure time is a feature of modernity. Watching television is primarily associated with leisure and to a large extent pleasure as for Daniel it stands in opposition to work. '*Sky Plus*' helped Daniel personalise and develop unique viewing practices but Daniel is also ambivalent about this as he explains:

I did *Bleak House*⁴⁴ was it? I *Sky Plussed* every episode. Well I got up on the Sunday morning and I actually sat down and watched it from beginning to end. Just getting up to pause it. So I watched every episode in one go. I thought 'that was really good'. I'm not sure from people I spoke to they got a bit fed up having to wait from week to week for each episode so I was really pleased that I watched it all the way through. I'm very sad aren't I?

Bauman (1999) argues that the separation of work and leisure associated with modernity can be used to explain particular attitudes to 'time', in particular the future as a 'target' which the individual travels towards in the hope of fulfilment 'towards another present distinct from' and 'more desirable' than the current present (1999:3). To achieve this individuals attempt to manipulate time and time is evaluated between presents of 'differing quality and varying value'.

One trend Bauman (1999) notes is that work becomes 'an activity that derives its value from what it is not' preparing the ground for non-work and leisure time' (Bauman, 1993:4). As Daniel notes this non-work time is what he 'tortures' himself for. Conversely, Daniel has made himself indispensable at work rarely taking time off and this feeds what Bauman calls an 'opposing tendency' of 'work for work's sake' (Bauman, 1993:4). Work provides the justification for filling his leisure time with viewing. There are always plenty of programmes and films Daniel is happy to watch on a daily basis and he never struggles to find something he likes. This pattern of work and viewing has become the rhythm of Daniel's life but he is also anxious about this as the above extract illustrates.

⁴⁴ BBC Television 2006

Advances in technology such as *Sky Plus*, offer the viewer immense power to manipulate time. The pause and re-wind functions allow control over the sequence of events and 'bulk' viewing replacing several 'weeks' with one day. Section 5.9 explores the significance of the manipulation of time in relation to viewing for Daniel. However it is necessary first to explore the meaning and uses of viewing through an examination of identity and identification. This can be approached through an examination of transference and countertransference evidence.

5.8 Transference and Countertransference: a 'nice guy'

Daniel is friendly, intelligent and chatty and seemed to enjoy both interviews. I sensed sadness at the end of the second interview and it was difficult to bring both interviews to a close. I sensed Daniel was lonely and appreciated the company. The house appeared to need a little 'loving' and this was also my feeling about Daniel. My overriding sense across both interviews was that Daniel wanted a relationship. These feelings could not be ignored and provide evidence via processes of unconscious communication. However the evidence of my feelings are triangulated with other forms of evidence from Daniel's viewing practices and textual identifications, which support this. For example at interview one Daniel offered to make me a drink made me some tea and served it to me in a cup decorated with a football logo. He seemed slightly embarrassed by this as it seemed to confirm the lack of a feminine touch in his home. On my second visit he made a point of saying he had found me a 'better' cup and this cup was lilac and feminine.

He would happily have talked for hours. Daniel tells me about films and programmes he has watched that he was not even particularly fond of, yet runs through large sections of the plot or action in *detail* demonstrating his ability to use viewing to "get lost in". We covered vast amounts of texts in the interviews.

For Daniel relationships are mediated. He engages with life, feelings, experiences, emotions, history, politics and the everyday primarily through the mediums of film and television, and to some extent, literature. We discuss a wide range of topics (prompted by Daniel) from civil rights and science to 'history' but the discussion is structured around film narratives or television events, such as the first Moon landing or the shooting of John F. Kennedy. Viewing provides Daniel with excitement, sadness, fear, anger and boredom, all components that make up the rich texture that constitutes life experience. When Daniel was telling me every detail of the opening sequence of *By Dawn's Early Light*⁴⁵, when the pilots were flying planes into a possible nuclear situation, I was reminded of a little boy demonstrating the sounds of the engines and the 'pow, pow, pow' of the guns and I thought the film allowed Daniel to 'play'.

Another theme that Daniel returned to concerned his increasing social isolation, as he is socialising less and less "these days". The question arose then, what purpose

⁴⁵ 1991 HBO *Dir Jack Sholder*

does absorbing himself in viewing serve and does it mean he is able to postpone facing the consequences of his choices not to socialise or do other activities? Also something appeared to be generated by the interview and out of the intersubjective dynamics of the research relationship, a kind of analytic 'third' (Ogden, 2001) that can be explored.

When I arrived for the second interview Daniel was having a beer with a male cousin who was "just leaving" as Daniel had told him I was arriving. It was clear they had been talking about me and there were some indications (though not uncomfortable) from the cousin that the interview was also like a 'date' for Daniel. He asked me about my research and he said Daniel would be an excellent person to interview due to his "avid viewing". I realised that Daniel as a 'viewer' was one of the ways his family and work colleagues saw him. I was perceived as intelligent and of Daniel's age group. On the first visit I had asked if he had anything decaffeinated and he apologised as he "didn't buy it". On the second visit I was given a feminine cup and treated to a frothy 'decaff' cappuccino he had obviously purchased specially. I found this thoughtful and I had the feeling he was giving me a gift and paying attention to my femininity. It points to the way my presence and the interview contributed to a form of afterwardsness: current concerns, loneliness, the need for a relationship, became apparent in response to this forcing particular memories, texts and readings to the forefront.

Both interviews were 'easy' in the sense that Daniel was an enthusiastic and accommodating interviewee. They were also 'difficult' in that he frequently went into long detailed descriptions of plot, narrative development and visual details. I had strong feelings of getting 'lost' in his discussions, rather like the rhythm of Daniel's viewing as he becomes lost'. I liked Daniel very much but often felt claustrophobic, feeling I was 'getting lost' in the minute details of the numerous programmes he discussed. Williams (1974) uses the term 'flow' to explain the viewer's experience of moving seamlessly through an evening's viewing and how television provides a structure which organises domestic activity. Television viewing has become an organising structure for Daniel that is in excess of an everyday habitus because of the emotional purposes it serves, and Daniel's study illuminates the *experience* of 'flow'. This is also useful to the discipline of television studies as this concept is now thought to be outdated and irrelevant in the current environment of personalised viewing.

I want to discuss the themes of taste and identity in Daniel's interviews. Most interviewees are quick to answer a question about tastes, likes and dislikes. I ask this early in the interview and here there is usually some negotiation around identity where interviewees qualify their tastes and show they are aware of the difference between 'good' and 'bad' taste. They understand, as Bourdieu showed, that these are markers of identity and are used in a variety of ways to display intelligence, style, class and gender identity. As discursive approaches have shown, this is often constructed in the course of the interview, but I have found this to be most apparent early in the interviews and can be seen as a defensive strategy. It was particularly apparent in the male interviewees. This is explored further in Chapter Six. In this

case Daniel attempted to convince me that he is intelligent. His choice of text illustrates a rejection of a genre associated with 'low culture' and foregrounds the university as a place of intelligence:

I don't watch a lot of quiz shows⁴⁶. I think the only one I watch is *University Challenge*. Because they are unbelievably clever but the one question they don't know is the easiest, the one that I can get. If I can get four right in a programme I am really happy. People at work say 'what do you watch that for?' I say 'well you're always telling me how clever I am'. So I watch it to see if I really am. I don't watch it as often as I used to. *It's all to do with me, time slots* [my emphasis]. If things are on at the right time then it's yes I'll watch it. Sometimes it's clashed with something else I've been watching and I've got out of the habit of watching. It's a habit thing and I'll make time to watch it.

As well as discursively positioning himself as intelligent and that his colleagues see him as clever he chooses a text to discuss that directly relates to me as a university researcher. This extract also contains an example of the way time and time as structure, continually appears in Daniel's discussions of texts, viewing and his life.

Daniel is not only intelligent he is a "nice guy". He tells me he identifies with characters "that are sort of good, because it's the way I was brought up". He links this to a rather heroic self-sacrificing image of masculinity:

A girl at work said to me the other day 'all you seem to be put on this planet for is to make people happy. I said 'is that a bad thing?' and she said 'no it's a good thing but you make other people happy before you make yourself happy'. I've always fancied myself as a bit of a detective. Righting wrongs. I'd like to be helping people sort of thing.

Daniel constructs a heroic identity for someone who rarely socialises and spends most of his time alone watching television or with his parents. Out of the many films Daniel discusses he tells me about two films that are particular favourites and that make him cry. He watches these so that he can feel sad, suggesting a form of catharsis: "I just wanted to let some emotion out". *Forest Gump*⁴⁷ and *Simon Birch*⁴⁸ are united by narratives featuring "nice guys" and "not everybody lives happily ever after" endings. For example 'Forest Gump' is "a nice guy and he's not got a bad bone in his body and you want him to be happy. You know it ended quite sadly". In the case of *Simon Birch*: "The whole story is very, very sad. Fifteen years ago I could have watched that and not shed a tear. Now I don't know why, it's like the flood gates are open and you think 'oh God' that's really sad. Whether or not that's because you get older".

As we get older past and present are evaluated and the future takes on new meanings that are not always easy for the self (Freeman, 1993; Bauman 1999). Youthful optimism is often replaced by the reality that 'happy endings' are not

⁴⁶ Despite what he says here he discusses many quiz shows in the interviews.

⁴⁷ 1994 Dir Robert Zemeckis USA

⁴⁸ 1998 Dir Mark Johnson USA

always possible. During the interview Daniel insisted I watch *Simon Birch* and when he later produced a copy of the DVD for me I was struck by the physical resemblance between Daniel and the actor who plays the “nice guy” who “helps everybody” in the narrative suggesting evidence of identification with this role.

It is interesting to note that Daniel’s discussion begins with a personal retrospection. Fifteen years ago Daniel would have been twenty-one and living at home with his parents. His reason for selecting fifteen years ago is not apparent, although retrospectively he may locate this time as a ‘turning point’ or a moment when made a significant life choice as narrative and life history researchers have shown (McLeod, 1997; Roberts, 2002). When Daniel lived at home, watching television was the main source of entertainment. When his sisters left and he attempted to find time on his own Daniel explained that he would be called down from his room so that Daniel and his parents could watch television together. There was a form of physical intimacy and discussion of the programme that facilitated communication. This has continued since he moved out, to a house physically very close to his parents, with phone calls being made on the pretence of needing to share a programme experience or sports event on television. He explains that he watches the same sports events as his parents:

They watch speedway on television and I watch it here and we say ‘did you watch speedway’, and now they watch darts and Mum gets very excited and I phone and ask ‘did you watch darts’?

There is evidence that in his late teens / early twenties that Daniel had already adopted intensive viewing practices that differed from those of other young people his age at that time. When Daniel was nineteen his parents went on holiday for the first time without him. This was Daniel’s first experience of being alone at home but rather than having wild parties or friends around he spent the entire week alone watching videos of a programme he had already seen: *Twin Peaks*⁴⁹. The ‘pleasure’ was in watching the series in one go without viewing anything else. He explains:

I got a week off work and I arranged with work to have a week off work, basically erm, it must have been late 80’s early 90’s. Well when it was on television. I honestly can’t remember. It was the time before I had a mobile phone and then the phone wasn’t likely to ring at home and I wasn’t going to be disturbed. So literally I would get up, sit, and watch and watch and watch until right, that’s you know bedtime. Get up the next day, watch and watch and watch and that’s what I did.

The viewing was the central part of the experience although Daniel planned a few enhancements:

I mean I deliberately ordered ... I had the videos but I waited until I could watch them in one go. I ordered these notes from the BBC, which I sent away for and they told you what was going on in every episode. You lose yourself in the plot. I got these A4 notes. It didn’t tell you what was going to

⁴⁹ 1990 Dir David Lynch USA

happen but it said 'the log lady will say something interesting'. So you would wait the whole episode for this. There was all these weird things going on and that was the clever thing about *Twin Peaks*.

For Daniel it was a form of absorption that stopped him thinking about anything else. Viewing in this way absorbs time, it provided a structure, and is outside of conventional uses of time, day or night.

Daniel is aware that his desire to view in one go is unusual and he notes his discomfort with this when he repeats that he's "sad". Throughout the interview Daniel mentions different conversations with people at work and it is clear that viewing provides the subject matter for many conversations. He had told his colleagues about his week of *Twin Peaks*:

When I was telling people who I work with I'd done that years back. I think people look at me in a different light. 'Is he weird or something?' I say 'well I wanted to do it' sort of thing. 'And he's the gaffer'. They were saying 'well I was going on 18-30 holidays' and I say 'well I wasn't I was watching *Twin Peaks*'.

This extract suggests that Daniel's work colleagues are of a similar age and here Daniel emphasises his 'difference' from people his own age both then and now. The example of 18-30 holidays is pertinent because these kinds of holidays are associated with outgoing, single people, meeting the opposite sex and drinking. This contrasts sharply with Daniel whose difference is articulated around sitting at home, viewing. Zittoun (2006) would argue that this was an example of collecting symbolic resources for 'comfort' as Daniel was facing the 'rupture' of being parted from his parents for the first time. Daniel had been close to his parents and had not been parted from them before. The emotional and social demands on a quiet, 'good boy' of doing what he fantasises other young people are doing on an 18-30 holiday would be unmanageable for Daniel. This experience of watching provided a sense of security and also ensured control and the pleasures associated with intense viewing crystallised into a repeatable experience.

Exploring the narrative detail, I attempted to find out about particular scenes and characters that were significant for Daniel. He offered me numerous snippets of "plots, sub-plots and counter sub-plots" (the more detail the better as he can become even more absorbed). The most substantial data presented concerned the potential relationship between a detective, who Daniel fantasises about being, and Audrey:

Well I think every time 'Audrey' came on screen you were more interested as she was a good lookin' girl and she was flaunting herself around sort of. And you were constantly thinking you know, you sort of knew people who were a bit like that, sort of. You can sort of empathise with her. I'm a lad and she's a girl and you can sort of think I know *lads* [my emphasis] who are a bit like

her. And you wanted her to get off with Dale Cooper⁵⁰ because he was such a nice guy, not a straight dull boring one sort of thing. You know she needs to be, you want her to be happy, she was a nice, likable character in a seedy situation sort of thing. I think sort of, every time she was on. It's probably one of those things, now you mention it, and I've got some *spare time* [my emphasis] I will probably sit and watch it again. I can still remember a lot of the episodes. I think they did this thing with a, where she put a cherry in her mouth and tied the stalk of the cherry into a knot or whatever. You know as a bloke you think 'bloody hell' you know (laughs).

I have indicated that there was countertransference evidence that Daniel was lonely and wanted a relationship. There is also evidence in Daniel's textual identification. The sexual and desirous nature of the extract requires some examination. This scene would have been viewed when Daniel was a teenager likely to be dealing with feelings around his sexuality. 'Popping the cherry' is a colloquial term for loss of virginity so it is possible this was a concern at that time or currently. He re-approaches this scene but his re-reading can be viewed as an example of afterwardsness in the light of his current desire for a relationship, something that was being communicated in the transference.

The scene is structured around desire and the interview discussion allows Daniel to articulate masculine desire for sex as a natural response to the scene. Focussing on an actress rather than expressing desire for sex in a real relationship makes this 'safe'. If relationships are difficult for Daniel for whatever reason, viewing allows Daniel to displace and make safe his desire for a heterosexual relationship onto on-screen couples. There are some interesting projections and slips in this extract. Daniel says he knows '*lads*' who are like Audrey, the slip indicating cross-gender identification. Daniel might desire Audrey's attributes of good looks and sexual attractiveness, also her flirtatiousness and control. Daniel had explained that his fantasy was to be a detective. Detectives are also associated with a particular form of successful masculinity which to some extent Daniel can associate with his life style choices: lonely, intellectual and in control. It is no surprise therefore that he is able to project himself into this scene, as he wanted her to 'get off' with the detective character. He also describes Agent Cooper, the detective, as a 'nice guy' and as shown previously, this is a central aspect of his self-identity. Daniel then explains that some nice guys are 'straight' and 'boring' but Agent Cooper wasn't boring and nice guys can also be exciting. I sensed this qualification was included as Daniel realises his life may be perceived as boring but he disavows this in favour of his vision of himself as a nice guy who is sexually attractive and someone a woman would want to have a relationship with.

Based on a discussion of the above extract with colleagues⁵¹ where a colleague noted that my hairstyle and colour had changed, and coupled with the 'gift' of the coffee and feminine mug, I realised that this was further evidence that my presence indicated that Daniel desires a relationship. I realised that at the time of the

⁵⁰ A detective.

⁵¹ Members of the International Research Group for Psycho-societal Analysis

interview I had looked similar to the actress playing Audrey in the series. This could also explain Daniel's choice of this scene. The slip into Audrey's role also allows Daniel to articulate his needs through a projection onto Audrey. Audrey/ Daniel wants and needs to be 'happy'. Audrey was, like Daniel, a 'nice', 'likeable' character who needed to be rescued, and be in a relationship and she needed a change to her "seedy" circumstances. This poses a very obvious but pertinent question that if Daniel wants and needs a relationship why does he structure his life around practices that preclude possibilities for meeting potential partners? Daniel's approach to narrative illuminates this ambivalent and confusing position.

Daniel dislikes narrative closure and this manifests in the idea of "will they, won't they" have a relationship. This theme emerged many times in discussion of characters and texts and is a pleasurable hook into the narrative. He gives this example:

To me that whole thing succeeded because it revolved round a male and female character will they / won't they sort of thing. I'm a big *Dr Who* fan and he's always had female assistants. Going way back there wasn't sort of any romance he was someone to be looked up to. But the new series they've sort of hit on this will they / won't they relationship. I've been watching *Torchwood* the *Dr Who* spin-off on BBC3. I quite like that. But they've sort of ruined that for me because the key female character has ended up copping off with one of the other characters and I found that totally unbelievable. Well I just thought that's sort of ruined it for me that has. Thinking the whole thing is built on two main characters will they/ won't they and now she's gone off with somebody else, you're thinking, well that's sort of *broken that barrier* [my emphasis] that you sort of wanted to carry on week in week out.

Daniel is a big fan of the new *Dr Who*, so it is likely that he identifies with the Doctor. In past series the Doctor did not get romantically involved with his assistants as he was 'someone to be looked up to', rather like Daniel a leader. The writers introduced romance and the viewer is not certain if a romance will develop. The uncertainty is exciting and if Daniel fantasises he is the Doctor then a romance may develop. Narrative closure ruins this for Daniel particularly because the female lead did not 'cop off' with the main character that Daniel had invested in. Narrative closure closes down the fantasy and pleasurable aspects of the text. Bauman (1998) notes that procrastination is an ambivalent form of delayed gratification. The procrastinator has a 'goal' but does not want to reach the goal because there is finality in the goal. The pleasure is in thinking about the goal and planning how to get there and this is similar to the staging of desire. Procrastination is a form of ambivalence which frustrates the goal by continually 'putting off' reaching that which is desired. This is not just an approach to texts, however, as it is associated with his lifestyle practices.

Daniel gives another example, of watching international football, usually associated with group viewing on television:

It's like if England are on now, I automatically think 'well I won't watch it, but then it will probably be a good game, and everybody else will watch it and be able to enjoy it, but if I watch it, it will be absolutely awful'.

Here is a man who likes football and subscribes to a sports package on television yet the thought of viewing what for many would be an un-missable viewing event provokes anxiety. There is ambivalence about the match. If he watches it will be rubbish, if he doesn't he will miss something special. This is another example of a will they/ won't they ambivalent position. It also suggests that communal viewing events, which suggest social interaction, communication and intimacy are anxiety provoking for Daniel who spends more and more time alone. The next section explores the significance of time for Daniel and the uses of viewing.

5.9 Time Holding and Preoccupation

Bauman's observations about time are useful in helping to understand the concept of leisure time in contemporary capitalism. However, psychoanalytic perspectives can enhance this by thinking about the personal significance of time. I have discussed time as a structure. Daniel also likes narratives which pivot on the concept of 'time' e.g. *Back To The Future* and *The Time Traveller's Wife*⁵². Daniel likes the possibility of moving back and forth through our own histories because it offers the possibility in phantasy of changing the past, but Daniel tells me is uncertain if he wants to know the future as it is frightening. *Forest Gump* similarly is a film that explores American history inserting the leading character, a simple, 'nice guy' like Daniel, into the momentous events of thirty years of US history and making him a hero. *Simon Birch* is about 'time', time passing, and the limits of time, the achievement of goals and dreams and the finality of death. The main protagonist is aware he is dying and his time is limited but his aim is not to put off, but to do something heroic, Daniel also seeks a heroic identity. In these 'time' narratives, time is often 'under threat' as it is limited. This poses a challenge for Daniel as characters that are forced into action confront him. In Daniel's everyday life, time is also under 'threat' as it is limited and divided between the 'torture' of work and his leisure time which looms before him and it must filled if it is to be spent alone at home and this is not an easy prospect for a single man living alone.

Daniel converts time outside of work into *viewing and reading time*. Daniel has chosen limited object use and engagement with what Bollas called a 'narrow colony of objects' within limited cultural forms, as described, consistent with what Bollas (1995) and Mann (2002) view as conservative object use. As noted, Silverstone (1994) pointed to the transitional features of television such as constancy and its soothing anxiety management functions. Transitional phenomena are internalised into psychic structures that, in health, one can draw on for 'comfort' in anxiety provoking situations (Grolnick, 1990). There is evidence that in Daniel's family television had been an important 'object' used not only for entertainment but

⁵² Our conversation was based on the book *The Time Traveller's Wife* that was in the process of being turned into a film at the time of the interview. Daniel had spent a lot of time imagining how the director would visualise various key scenes

communication and intimacy. This suggests television might be an evocative and comforting object as it links Daniel with family and childhood when he was part of a group in contrast to his solitary life now. However Winnicott's concept of 'holding' is a more effective concept for understanding Daniel's complex relationship with viewing and time.

'Holding' is an 'ontological concept concerned with the nature of being and its relationship to time' (Ogden, 2004:1349). Holding is used to explore the 'experience of being alive' and, in particular, the means by which a 'sense of continuity of being is sustained over time' (Ogden, 2004:1350). Winnicott (1965c:44) calls this 'going on being'. In earliest infancy, prior to the child becoming a subject, the mother, through her maternal preoccupation, absorbs the impact of man-made time. Time is 'other' to the infant and the world of clocks, schedules, routine and calendars is profoundly threatening at this stage where what is 'not me' is extremely disrupting of the child's continuity of being. In maternal preoccupation the mother forgoes her own needs and enters into the child's sense of time based around the infant's needs for sleep, food etc. The mother provides a setting in which the child can develop a self. In this place, Ogden (2004:1350) says that the child gathers together the various 'bits', which eventually come together for the child to feel integrated. Transitional phenomena occur in a 'third space', an area of experience between reality and fantasy. It is in this space that the child learns to experience and tolerate being alone as well as manage the anxieties associated with this. Ogden states that here time becomes a symbol or mark of the external world outside of the child's control but, at the same time, it is connected to the child's physical and psychological rhythms (2004:1353). This is associated with the move towards a more realistic and ambivalent depressive position. Time is other to the infant but the child copes with this as it learns to experience a continuity of self over time.

Ogden describes a primitive sensory dominated mode of experience known as 'autistic contiguous' that I want to link to holding and the physical experience of viewing. This mode of experience is concerned with the infant's relationship with 'surfaces'. The surface of the mother's skin, the rhythm of her breathing, changes of temperature at the surface of the skin sustain the child in a 'non-reflexive state of sensory going on being' (Ogden, 1989:32). The soothing relationships with sounds and shapes and surfaces are important as they are the most primitive forms of holding the child experiences and anxiety can be reduced in later life by allowing oneself to become 'moulded' (1989:33) to surface and sensory environment. This is a primitive form of holding and can explain why lying on the sofa in the dark watching the flickering lights of the television associated with intensive viewing practices forms an important holding function. Whilst television viewing may reduce anxiety this must be understood as part of a wider form of conservative object use.

For Bollas (1995) unconscious freedom is needed for creative⁵³ living. The subject *must* be open to unconscious experiencing and to do this must be able to use the world of objects and be open to being 'used' by objects. How should we understand how Daniel is using viewing as a practice and what is the relationship to time? Similarities between film form and the dream are evoked particularly in time travelling narratives such as the use of flashback/forward. Characters from different time periods meet, do impossible things, swap identities and have forbidden sexual relationships. This provokes a sense of unease as in the Freudian (1915/2003) concept of the 'uncanny' where the familiar and the everyday are made strange. *Twin Peaks* is noted for its dreamlike and uncanny qualities.

Bollas argues that everyday unconscious experience is also structured like a dream. There is a rhythm to the everyday in healthy functioning individuals, that is analogous to the dream, involving bringing together psychic intensities, ideas are condensed, then 'crack up' or dissipate (1992,1995) This builds on Winnicott (1965a, 1971) who wrote that being able to respond to desires, follow unconscious logic and take pleasure in the world by becoming immersed in objects, is one of the ways the child learns to follow its desires and become a true, rather than false self. So opening oneself up to the dream like qualities of the everyday which viewing offers can be seen as a creative act which should enrich the unconscious (Bollas, 1995:76). However Bollas argues that it is impossible to achieve this in any meaningful way without 'variety, 'difference' and 'uniqueness' (1995:92) which is captured in the phrase 'variety is the spice of life'. Subjects must be able to open themselves up to objects to achieve this. Bollas is interested in the barriers that individuals encounter or construct which hinder this development of openness. Daniel is 'open' to texts and viewing but there is evidence that Daniel wants a relationship and this will be difficult to achieve if he continues to fill up his time watching television.

Object use is not always generative and conservative objects close down or stifle unconscious creativity. Bollas discusses three forms of object relation and object use: 'obsession', 'preoccupation' and 'passion'. Obsessions such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorders make it impossible for subjects to experience the unconscious rhythms of everyday life because their mind is unable to move beyond the focus of the obsession (1995:72). A preoccupied person may also be occupied by a particular idea, or in Daniel's case, the activity of viewing, but there is more free internal mental space in which individual can prioritise their own mental life. The preoccupied person 'conjures up a mental space into which he can bring all of his interests to the exclusion of all else' (1995:79). This is often the defensive result of a trauma or difficulty with primary object relating coupled with (inherited) disposition, for example the demand for Daniel to be a 'good boy'. It is for this reason that liberated object use can provoke anxiety (Bollas 1995). Passionate object relating involves compelling and extreme emotions, including excitement and anger, often with a sexual or desirous component, focussed on a person, idea or activity, as seen in Daniel's viewing responses. The person is changed as he/she gets hooked. In the

⁵³ Bollas uses the term creative in a neutral way acknowledging that creativity is always preferable to a withdrawal from the world but not all creativity is positive, for instance the creativity of the serial killer or the fascist.

case of both preoccupation and passionate object relating there is space for creative thought, but the subject often lacks insight into how habits and practices became established. Where there is anxiety or trauma the individual 'conjugates up an object of such interest in order to preoccupy the potential space of a more liberated object use' and this 'betrays the anxieties that generate such a move on the part of the ego' (1995:88).

Viewing offers a variety of potentially intense but mediated experiences. Daniel has explained that 'barriers' are important and pleasurable for him. Television viewing acts as a barrier, providing the safety of having a range of desires met, whilst being held in time. This is part of the anxiety reducing function that viewing provides and it is possible that he unconsciously began this relationship with viewing fifteen years ago when he had the experience of watching *Twin Peaks*. This sensory experience could constitute growth but ultimately his viewing has restricted him from developing a more outgoing and adventurous personality. Evidence from transference, countertransferences and the texts has pointed to Daniel wanting a relationship but over time he is becoming less outgoing. By filling his time with something 'pleasurable' he does not have to confront the anxiety and difficulties associated with venturing into the world and trying to make relationships and not have to face rejection. However these themes, as suggested earlier, emerged as a result of processes of afterwardsness generated out of the research relationship.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates that the categories of active and passive audience are unable to capture the complexity associated with viewing. Conservative object use is not a symptom of audience passivity and lack of creativity. The idea of the conservative object captures the complexity of the emotional processes associated with viewing. Sophie illustrates that viewing choices and repeated viewings are driven (though not exclusively) by her emotional agenda. Her repeated viewings and emotional responses are indicative of the work of repetition compulsion where particular film scenes are used to try to address the trauma of abandonment. Her case also illustrates that it is not always desirable to abstract readings or 'reception' and viewing practices from wider object use and socio-historical analysis. Sophie's study illustrates that emotional responses can be in excess of the text. They do not result from contradictions in the narrative or serve purely cathartic functions.

This chapter furthers knowledge in media studies, showing the continuing and evolving relevance of the concept of 'flow' and television viewing, providing an in-depth examination of the experience of the use of the latest television technology. Daniel's study also shows how this technology can be used to address and also avoid emotional difficulties in particular around anxiety management and time. Both cases illustrate that transference and countertransference evidence can be used productively. Daniel's study illustrates the significance of the intersubjective dynamics on the production of data. It is not possible to present a definitive account of either Daniel or Sophie's viewing. It is important to note therefore that data analysis is always provisional. It is always possible to return to the data and track

other themes. In both cases I would suggest there are important themes that could be explored in greater depth around 'work' and 'consumerism'. However, it is still useful to show the possibilities and potential for the use of concepts such as repetition compulsion, afterwardsness, transitional object use and holding. The use of concepts in research aims to be generative, suggesting as many new questions as those it offers answers to, and clearly the inclusion of perspectives on 'objects' can enhance established film theory and audience research.

The next chapter explores another set of social and economic developments: social mobility, using object selection (texts) and use (viewing) to explore class, tastes and masculinity in the light of social mobility.

CHAPTER SIX

DEFENDED VIEWERS?

ANXIETY AND VIEWING

Film theory traditionally linked spectatorship with universal forms of anxiety that were assuaged by cinematic techniques. Psycho-social theories stress that subjects defend against anxiety emerging from internal conflicts and life events. Conflicts can arise from disappointments associated with relationships in infancy, and later in life, destabilising economic and other potentially traumatic events in the social world. Discursive and social constructionist accounts have been concerned with the construction of identity through language and out of contemporary discourses circulating in society. Once interpellated by discourse, individuals become aware that there is a disjunction between their perceptions of the way an identity position is supposed to feel and how it is lived (Roseneil, 2006). I have explained previously that at times the term identity is appropriate to use as it concerns processes of social recognition, acceptance and belonging which predominate at particular moments. Identity and how it is experienced is linked to subjectivity, which encompasses complex affective and lived responses to identity, as well as inner unconscious processes such as anxiety or phantasy which are not simply the predictable end products of identity but actively shape the particular ways identity is lived and experienced.

Questions continually arise about why individuals are interpellated by some discourses and not others. Identities change over time but transition is not always a smooth process. Psycho-social approaches allow us to examine the negotiation between external and internal conflicts that individuals experience when identities change. Both men featured in this chapter find viewing films "threatening" and "risky". This will be explained here through an examination of viewing and taste as a specific space where anxiety-provoking aspects of the separation between externally performed identity and inner subjectivity are experienced. I will show this is because processes of identity negotiation, with particular reference to masculinity, class and social mobility, contribute to a subjectivity that oscillates between repetitive anxiety provoking practices and defensive manoeuvres adopted to manage this.

6.1 Chris and Bill: Cineastes

Chris was the youngest man interviewed aged twenty-nine and Bill the oldest at sixty-two. They have shared similar experiences, but from different generational vantage points. They grew up in poor working-class households, have attended university, worked professionally in education and have 'moved' into the middle class. Bill is an example of a 'grammar school boy' as he passed the 11+ and is a product of a system where the talented individual was selected and schooled in a bourgeois education system. He is Oxbridge educated to a very high level and attended theology college. Chris, on the other hand, is a product of the state system. He is an example of widening participation in education, having attended a 'new' university for both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Chris is single and has his own home, a small cottage where he lives alone. Previously he lived with a girlfriend who he describes as “difficult” to understand. He has recently started a new relationship which is going well but causes him concern particularly around his employment status and ability to sustain a ‘reasonable’ income. Bill has been married for thirty-three years and has three children. He trained to enter the catholic priesthood and gave this up to marry, much to the distress of his family and in particular his father. He lives in a middle class area and his friends are teachers, academics, socialists and feminist activists. Recently retired, Bill is in the process of negotiating a post-work identity. Chris, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the on-going development of his professional identity. For both men their cultural, intellectual and work identities are merged. Chris works as a media librarian in a university library and Bill was a film teacher in a state school.

This fusion of professional and personal identity makes Chris and Bill ‘cineastes’ rather than ‘fans’. This term carries with it a certain cachet that marks the enthusiast as someone with intelligence and good taste, superior critical abilities and political awareness. Bill prefers film and watching at the cinema rather than on television and he lists his preferences as ‘classic’ films, social realist and ‘art’ cinema. Chris also likes ‘classic’ cinema, comedy in particular, and, in contrast to Bill, ironic, cult, low budget cinema. He prefers to watch at home which, I suggest, is also a generational difference. He is a fervent collector of videos and DVDs. This trend was noted in male cinema enthusiasts, made possible by the growth of home cinema technologies. The association with control has been theorised as a cultural symptom of masculinity in ‘crisis’ (Beynon 2002; Bainbridge and Yates 2007). The relationship between masculinity, anxiety and viewing is central to this chapter.

Bill’s favourite films are formally innovative and deal with political and ideological issues e.g. *Matewan*⁵⁴ and *The Battle of Algiers*⁵⁵. Chris likes ‘classic’ comedy films featuring Chaplin as well as contemporary ironic alternative films such as those made by the Coen brothers. Both men demonstrate their film credibility as they discuss films using the language of film criticism and theory, including, form, style, performance and ‘auteur’ theory. Chris explains that he lacks confidence in his intellectual abilities, which I will explore below. Bill conversely, has an air of authority where his critical abilities are concerned. He offers accounts of films that sound like reviews from serious film or cultural studies journals like *cineaste* or *Sight and Sound*. Bourdieu (1984) notes that popular cinema has often been a pleasure of the bourgeoisie, which he refers to as ‘slumming’, but this ‘slumming’ is counterbalanced by an intellectual approach to the cultural form. The term ‘fan’ is different to cineaste as it is used to describe someone immersed in popular or ‘low’ culture. In traditional discourses of taste, pleasure in popular culture is associated with a lack of taste and an uncritical engagement with crude, unsophisticated, mass-produced media products. Cultural studies on the other hand inverted this to some extent in the celebratory and active audience approaches described in Chapter Two. However, over the last forty years film theorists and bourgeois

⁵⁴ 1987 Dir John Sales USA

⁵⁵ 1967 Dir Gillo Pontecorvo Italy/ Algeria

intellectuals 'reclaimed' popular cinema to create a set of discourses that have turned popular film into a bourgeois 'object'. Auteur theorists, amongst others, re-evaluated popular Hollywood cinema, promoting the idea of popular film as an 'art' form. Serious intellectual engagement with certain types of film became a marker of taste and intellect in accordance with Bourdieu's (1984) original usage of the term cultural capital. Film was used by middle class spectators as a means of distinguishing themselves from those who 'consume' films (and merchandising) uncritically specifically, the working class. Bill and Chris are firmly attached to hegemonic forms of evaluation of films found in academic discourse. Bill in particular, is also attached to bourgeois patterns of viewing, preferring to view in art cinemas rather than multi-plex (Bennett et al, 2009).

Adopting the identity of a cineaste avoids being positioned by negative discourses associated with 'pathological' and 'uncritical' fandom (Jenson, 1992). This study shows how both men deploy cultural capital in a strategic, discursive and defensive way to support their identities in similar ways to those described by critical discursive approaches to identity formation; Chris with less success than Bill. However this chapter also examines taste as expressing an unconscious anxiety in relation to the deployment of cultural capital as one of a series of defensive processes.

Whilst Bourdieu offered important insights into the relationship between culture, class and power, gender is also significant. Connell (1995) describes the importance of the idea of a mind/ body split in theorising masculinity and patriarchal culture, where masculine authority is predominantly connected with disembodied reason. Psychoanalysis has shown that reason and rationality are also defensive responses to unconscious anxiety. 'Intellectualisation' or 'motivated' forgetting (also linked to 'rationalisation') is, according to Anna Freud, (1937) an ego defence acquired early in life. The ego attempts to control desirous or destructive impulses by connecting them with acceptable ideas which can be dealt with in consciousness. Presenting, or turning, difficult thoughts, phantasies, and desires into rational objects disconnects the anxiety from affect or feeling based responses. Affect is neutralised and kept at 'arms length' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:225). For both interviewees intellect and the demands to display an acceptable identity provoke anxiety and the former is used for anxiety management.

It is possible, then, to see intellectualisation and rationalisation as defence mechanisms that are particularly relevant in relation to anxiety around masculinity because of this mind/ body split. As feminist writers have shown, the attributes associated with binary oppositions are assigned different cultural values, masculine attributes being of greater cultural, social and economic value (Gledhill 1997; Grosz 1990; Butler 1990; Tong 1989, Cixous & Clement 1986) Different class positions mean there is unequal access to the cultural resources needed to obtain intellectual forms of authority. Bill, who is older and has experienced a bourgeois cultural and educational inculcation, is skilled at utilising intellect defensively. I will explore this in some depth below. Chris does not have the same resources available, so 'intellect', particularly in relation to viewing, becomes a site of intense anxiety that

feeds into his work and personal identity. Chris is often aware of difficult feelings and explicitly perceives intellectual control as a means of managing this anxiety.

Issues concerning difficult work identities, relationships with women and 'masculinity', marked both interviews. Connell (1995) argues that masculinity is not unified; there are only masculinities and many ways of doing masculinity in relation to differing degrees of power. Masculinities are also made and performed in relation to class and generation. Despite this, both interviewees' data displays features associated with what has been called the 'crisis' of masculinity, one strand focused on the impact of changes in employment patterns and the loss of traditional forms of manual / skilled employment for working class men. How does this affect the identities of men like Chris and Bill, from working class backgrounds, who have experienced social mobility? How is this experienced in everyday life? I will explore contrasts in age and educational background and the way anxiety is generated by certain impact texts and viewing practices as a reflection of these differences.

6.2 Chris: "Twitchy" and "a little bit obsessed"

Chris is the middle child of three children with an older sister and a younger brother. His father works as a manual labourer and his mother is a housewife. His home is cosy and stylish with a mixture of traditional and modern features. The centrepiece of the lounge is a framed original film poster of *The Nutty Professor*⁵⁶. This house has all the trappings and appearance of a 'young upwardly mobile professional'.

Chris describes himself as an "anxious" person. He worries about his intellectual and practical abilities and is concerned that he is "useless" and a "loser", in aspects of both his professional and personal life. He lacks confidence with technology and worries that this will be "exposed" at work. For example, he showed me a telephone with lots of complicated functions and explained that, despite working with technology in the library, his Dad had to help him set it up. There are lots of bits of technology that he feels uneasy with. His Dad visits him every couple of weeks to do all his practical DIY jobs because he is "useless" at those tasks too. The visits from his father also help maintain the intimate relationship Chris had with his father as a child (discussed below). Chris displays ambivalent feelings, phantasies and fears about his masculinity. Sennett and Cobb (1972:268) link masculinity to displays of 'ability': if a man is educated, he is expected to be able to demonstrate 'ability' and can cope with tasks that demand skill and competency. Chris worries continually about his lack of ability in work and personal relationships, explaining that his previous relationship "knocked me back". He worried that he was unable to "stand up to" his demanding girlfriend. He has a new relationship but he is "absolutely petrified" about the future, as his new girlfriend lives in London and has a very well paid professional job. He is worried about his perceived poor economic prospects and he links these to the potential failure of the relationship saying: "Why

⁵⁶ 1963 Dir Jerry Lewis USA

would she look at me? She earns three times what I do and in a few years I will still be on a pittance?"

Beynon (2002) collates contemporary discursive themes to construct the various features of the 'crisis' of masculinity; the disparaged and incompetent man is one character. He performs poorly at things that traditionally were assumed men did well, such as household and practical chores. Men in 'crisis' are also unable to understand or meet the needs of women. Masculinity is said to be marked by 'vulnerability and insecurity' as men are constantly forced to question the things that they would have been able to take for granted in the past (2002:135). Chris grew up in a working class home, where his father was the 'breadwinner' and this was an important sign of masculinity. The physical strength and endurance associated with skilled manual labour were said to offer working class men secure forms of masculinity (Beynon 2002; Willis, 1982) Chris's father's physical presence, his tiredness after a days work, are recalled with affection as will be described later. Recent years have seen the rise in 'credentialism', where middle class men are located in employment that requires technological computing competency and keyboard skills (previously seen as women's work), now re-defined as a middle class arena of 'competition and power' (Connell, 1995:55). As a librarian however, Chris is not occupying the new spaces of power such as IT, or banking where the rewards are high. He occupies a space precariously close to 'women's work', with low pay and insecurity about his ability to master and control technology. Chris's discourse displays signs of the contradictory experience of living as a new member of the technological middle class.

Two of Chris's favourite films and characters involve men who masquerade as women, *Fletch*⁵⁷ and *Some Like It Hot*⁵⁸. *Fletch* is about a newspaper reporter who writes under the name of a woman and 'Daphne' is 'Jerry', a musician on the run from the mob, in drag. He tells me he identifies particularly with Daphne/ Jerry (who is dominated by his friend Joe/ Josephine), because Jerry lets others "walk all over him" and Chris wishes he were better at standing up for himself. Here we can see links to his identification with a passivity associated with femininity and his experience of himself in past relationships with girlfriends.

Chris finds himself compelled to collect, catalogue and order and he uses this activity to manage anxiety and also as a form of avoidance of difficult feelings:

I started collecting stuff, well because, *I was having a bit of a ropey time* [my emphasis] And I just needed something to do. So I was kind of *pushing things away* [my emphasis] and getting a little bit obsessed about stuff. And I ended up with *loads and loads of films*. I got really obsessed about recording films. I ended up with mountains of videos and all these films I never have a chance to watch. I'm *really anal* about stuff like that you know.

⁵⁷ 1985 Dir Mike Ritchie USA

⁵⁸ 1959 Dir Billy Wilder USA

This suggests that Chris was aware that there was an element of repression and an attempt to evacuate difficult 'ropey' feelings in his collecting. Unlike Sophie, who attempts to use objects in a container / contained relationship, for Chris it is the act of collecting and ordering that is more significant than the emotional relationship with the object. In fact the aim is to avoid affect. Bainbridge and Yates (2007) have concentrated on the relationship between masculinity and technologies in the home. They argue that cultures of DVD cinema consumption and the use of technologies such as pause, rewind and forward are used by men to placate desires and phantasies for mastery and control, associated with the 'certainties' offered by traditional forms of masculinity. These forms are less accessible for Chris in the middle class professional space he occupies. At home, with his video/ DVD collection, he has an element of control that he feels eludes him in his work life.

'Fans' of popular culture are often ridiculed and their behaviour is understood through discourses of pathology (Jenson, 1992). Chris frequently picks up on such discourse, and is worried that his viewing behaviours are unusual. He displays concerns about his collecting in terms of "obsession" and describes his need to catalogue his collection as "anal". He adopts a form of linguistic trivialisation most specifically in conjunction with 'pathological' terms such as a "little bit ill", "obsessed", "depressed" and "frustrated". The "little bit" seems to be used to lessen the impact of the negative pathological term adopted. His fears and anxieties are expressed in relation to his viewing habits and difficult identification with some characters in films.

Chris *collects* films rather than watch them, because viewing films is often an experience that generates unpleasant anxiety:

I couldn't really sit and watch a film on my own I'd get too twitchy. I do go to the cinema every now and then, but on my own, I do get twitchy.

Interviewer: What do you mean by twitchy?

Well instead of sitting watching the film I'd be worried I should be doing the washing up or something. And I'd get up and do it half way through the film. And there has been times when I've rented a film and have got up and done something half way through and I haven't even watched the end of the film. Not necessarily because I'm not interested in the film, I think it's just the environment I'm in. I can't relax if I'm on my own. I find that a bit frustrating really because I come home from work and all I want to do is slob out and watch a film, not necessarily to totally engage with it – but to switch off.

Chris explains twitchiness by contrasting with "*comforting*" films and viewings. 'Comforting' is associated with viewing in an emotionally secure environment as a child: "That's when I first started getting into comedy films". He has happy memories of coming home and watching comedies after school and in particular a 'Jerry Lewis week' where he watched a film every night. *The Nutty Professor* "definitely does bring back that sort of memory, *that homely safe feeling*". Some

comedies are “harmless, nothing dangerous or particularly threatening in them”. Freud thought that comedy allows repressed thoughts and desires to be released and this occurs at the punch line of a joke or at the slapstick moment and is released through laughter (1901/2002). In this case, classic zany comedy is also used to store self-states from childhood.

I asked: What is a threatening film?

A threatening film might be something I don't intellectually *understand*. I'll be really frustrated that I've watched it and haven't necessarily understood it. And I like to understand things. I wouldn't say I avoid those things but if I watch something and I haven't understood it I'd have to chase it up and read around it and *make myself* understand it. Watching it on my own I find that quite challenging. I like to be able to talk about it so I can understand it.

This extract displays Chris's anxiety about his intellectual abilities and the way he manages this anxiety through research, often unsuccessfully, which leaves him frustrated. To some extent this turns viewing into a form of intellectual labour. As he says, he doesn't avoid 'threatening' texts, in fact he makes a point of viewing films that he knows he finds difficult and describes them as 'favourites', presumably once they have been mastered intellectually. Discourses of taste interpellate particularly powerfully around the concept of intellect. Where social mobility is achieved through education rather than for instance financially, through self-employment or owning one's own business, intellect potentially becomes an arena, which can generate anxiety.

Films like *The Big Lebowski*⁵⁹ confront the viewer with a complex plot, unconventional dialogue and characters whose psychological motivation is often difficult to understand. Ability to engage with such characteristics allows a display of intellectual appreciation, but at the same time cause discomfort, suggesting a difference between outer and inner worlds. Chris, like Sophie, seeks out texts that he is aware generate difficult feelings. I explored identification with specific texts and found that these favourite, intellectual and cult texts all contain flawed characters who Chris perceives as “losers”:

Barton Fink, which I really like, but it was *gut wrenching* and sick making because he was such a *fake, weak willed* guy. 'Dunno I find that a bit disturbing really. I *hate* seeing really fake people, really weak-willed people who are really unsuccessful and to see that on film it gives me the shivers because I would so hate to be in their position it's almost *scary*.

The tone of Chris's voice here suggested a level of fear that is in excess of anything suggested by the text and I suggest that this level of fear relates to the narrative that provides a number of obvious points of identification for Chris. The film concerns a man's struggles with 'intelligence', failure in professional life, in

⁵⁹ 1998 Dir Joel and Ethan Coen USA

relationships with women and feelings of discomfort and aggression towards working class men. *Barton Fink* is a moderately successful screenwriter who is contracted to write a screenplay for a large Hollywood studio but develops writer's block. When he eventually finishes the script, it is not well received and he is devastated to be accused of lacking talent. There are numerous scenes in the film where Barton struggles to pass the time and to find a way through his problem. He is often curled up on his bed with a pillow over his head to shut everything out rather like Chris's desire to "slob out". Fink feels contempt for his working class neighbour and lacks confidence with women. He compensates by attempting to portray himself as a cultured intellectual when he meets an attractive woman.

There are points in the film where the viewer sees close-up shots of Fink feeling *extremely uncomfortable as he views films*. The sight of a weak, unsuccessful, fake intellectual man on screen is very difficult for Chris because it presents him with a number of his own fears around exposure and difficulties with women, but the "gut wrenching" aspect for Chris is not just that he is presented with fears, it concerns his *identification* with this flawed character. This fear is one of the ways social mobility is lived.

Reay (1997:20) discusses the 'failures of success'. She notes that there has been a failure to engage with the psychological effects of upward mobility. Zmroczek and Mahony (1997) summarise some of the feelings of 'anger and guilt', experienced by working class women working in the academy. In particular they note feelings of 'insecurity' about positions attained most often expressed in terms like those used by Chris, of a fear that one day the 'fraud' will be exposed (Zmroczek and Mahony, 1997:6; see also Sennett and Cobb, 1972). Reay (1997) describes feelings of intense guilt associated with the 'treacherous' process of leaving a part of her working class identity behind. Zmroczek explains that working class academics never *feel* fully comfortable with their lives in the academy. For those experiencing social mobility there are particular anxieties associated with this move, often focused around the effects on familial relationships. Chris has regular contact with his working class family, but, as I will show, Chris has to manage some difficult feelings about his move away from his working class background and these are in relation to his father in particular. Feelings of exclusion and fraud, where his career is concerned are also present and are reinforced in relation to his new, more successful partner.

A number of writers have utilised Bourdieu's (1984) 'cultural capital' (described below) to explain the role played by culture in maintaining social hierarchies (Skeggs, 1997; Morley 1997; Layton 2003). Layton (2003) develops Bourdieu's work on taste and argues that there is an unacknowledged link between conscious and unconscious processes where taste is concerned. Outward displays of 'taste' are often accompanied by feelings of fear and disgust towards self and others. Taste is bound up with anxiety provoking aspects of identity, primarily not wanting to be identified with characteristics or groups that one has learnt to find repulsive. This is a painful process associated with a move into the middle class where the upwardly mobile individual finds aspects of the self and others abhorrent (Layton 2003). To

explain the difficulties associated with *Barton Fink* it is worth reviewing three types of cultural capital as described by Bourdieu (1986).

The first concerns forms of capital *embodied* (Bourdieu 1986) in the individual; in accent, language use, and demeanour. In terms of embodied capital, Bill is the most securely middle class participant interviewed. Chris is not comfortable with a middle class demeanour and struggles to develop a petit-bourgeois habitus of self-discipline to try to overcome this. *Objective* capital (Bourdieu 1986) resides in physical things, which are owned. Bill and Chris both live in middle class areas in tastefully furnished houses. Possessions have both economic and symbolic value displaying economic power and good taste. *Institutionalised* capital exists in the form of official recognition of education and ability, for instance academic qualifications, credentials and experience. This results in financial rewards in the form of the employment it is possible to obtain. Dominant groups are able to impose their definition of what constitutes value upon other groups. Members of lower socio-economic groups lack all three forms of capital and have little potential for generating any of these. Possession of cultural capital is one of the ways middle-class individuals are distinguished from those who are working class (Bourdieu 1986).

Academia is an arena where all three kinds of capital are in operation. The relative value of each form of capital and the ways in which these forms of cultural capital are exchanged has changed dramatically. In the past, a combination of the three forms would have distinguished a middle-class from a working-class individual. Today this is not so straightforward. Possession of institutional capital does not have the same exchange value; many working class people now obtain degrees due to wider educational participation. The objective capital category has changed. It is possible for working class people to possess large amounts of objective capital, in the form of material goods without possession of other markers of taste or educational attainment. Contemporary society is marked by the change in these categories. Changes associated with media such as the rise of celebrity culture have impacted on the 'value' of traditional cultural markers of taste and class. As Beynon (2002:87) notes the 'Yuppie' is a symbol of 'millennium masculinity', connoting a particular type of masculinity associated with 'conspicuous consumption', being 'driven' with a 'ruthless desire to succeed'. This successful man operates in the financial and technological sectors. As a young man, Chris would have been more likely than Bill to have been exposed to, and interpellated by, this discourse. Achievement is questioned as education's cultural value has altered. To be well educated but to earn a 'pittance', as Chris fears doing, impacts on the sense of self, especially his masculine identity. This is a historically specific example of what Sennett and Cobb (1972:191) called the 'hidden injuries of class' where perceived outward failings, cause feelings of humiliation, and 'dignity' is threatened.

Layton's concept of the 'normative unconscious' explains that part of the unconscious is 'produced by social hierarchies', and I would add, discursively constituted identities. Sennett and Cobb (1972:192), though not psychoanalytic, argued that the effect of social class on masculine identity was a conscious form of

splitting. The self separates from itself to protect and preserve a part of the self from the ravages of class differences that destroy dignity, an essential component for fulfilling existence. Layton (2003:38) examines this as an unconscious process and argues that class identities are formed out of 'defensive splitting' (2003:38) (an unconscious separating of self and others as all 'good' or all 'bad') and that it is the splitting that creates anxiety largely because it is unrealistic and frightening. This can manifest in feelings of disgust and revulsion, like those felt by Fink in relation to his working class neighbour and for Chris in relation to the part of himself that is working class and his feelings about his family.

Layton argues that this kind of separation and conflict results in 'melancholia' or 'manic' defences (2003:49). There is evidence of both in Chris's interview from his obsession with collecting, for example, to his sense of his life being "depressed" and not "comfortable". His concern with his perceived lack of success at work and his feelings about his partner and appearing a 'loser' are linked with how Chris feels about being a man. This is an example of the way gender intersects with class to mediate the emotions behind taste. Men and women internalise class differences in different ways (Layton, 2002a, 2003) His anxieties revolve around particularly masculine aspects of his identity concerning work and intimate relationships with women (Beynon, 2002). Layton argues that all are born dependent and have conflicting feelings about neediness throughout life, but it is culture that gives a 'particular definition of neediness' and this concerns exposure, feelings of inadequacy, and the fear of being humiliated because we are 'weak'. Sennett and Cobb (1972) also recognise the need for love and recognition, which is something Layton sees as central in the way in which the self comes to adopt cultural norms. It is the fear of loss of love or displeasing parents that motivate the infant to learn to hate what the parent hates. The propensity to experience these particular forms of anxiety is acute in the academic arena. Chris adopts a petit-bourgeois habitus of self-discipline to deal with his anxiety. He uses films both consciously and unconsciously to accrue cultural capital and as theories of intellectualisation as defence suggest, to avoid feeling; but rather than moderating anxiety, it is *generated*.

For the economically disadvantaged, connection to community and family is important (Hadfield et al, 2006). Particular structural locations create specific anxieties in response to disadvantage and advantage. In the case of the middle classes, individuality and autonomy are emphasised. The more 'individual' a person is the more successful they are. Cultural capital and the development of individual tastes are inextricably linked to this process of individuation. At the same time, for Chris to be seen as having 'changed' or leaving takes a significant psychic toll (Hadfield et al, 2006:51).

The splitting associated with social mobility is particularly difficult as it involves a separation and feelings, possibly even as severe as disgust (Layton 2004), towards adored family members which leads to powerful feelings of guilt and loss. Two examples from Chris's viewing selection display psychic responses to the changes in family relationships resulting from social mobility; an aleatory moment from the

film *Porridge*⁶⁰ and *Frasier*⁶¹ a text that Chris uses transitionally to manage anxiety. In both cases it is impossible to understand Chris's responses without biographical knowledge.

For Chris the singular self-reliance associated with his middle class professional identity contrasts with 'comfortable' viewing when with others he feels intellectually unthreatened by. Comfortable and safe viewing is associated with family and viewing with others he felt safe with:

We wouldn't sit down and watch them together but my family would always be about. It does make me think of family 'cause if I was sitting watching that, my Dad would probably just be coming home from work and he'd come in when I was watching it for example. And 'me Mum'd be *buzzin' about doin' somethin'* [my emphasis].

Safe viewing is associated with the comforting rhythm of the everyday.

Cinema on the other hand evokes memories of intimacy with his father. Living in a small town with only one cinema:

You'd go and see a film maybe three or four times. And because I was quite young 'me Dad used to have to take me and he'd fall asleep in the opening credits. I've got really strong memories of going. I'd just wait around all day just to go to the cinema in the evening. So certain films are really evocative of that time, I could get quite emotional about it really if I thought about it too much.

The intimacy between Chris and his father, tired after a day of physical work, evokes emotions and memories. Chris presents the relationship as an 'exclusive' loving relationship and indicates that they always got on well. This may have changed over time as his specification of age indicates:

My memory is of it just being me and my Dad. And *at that age* I got on really well with my Dad I idolised him. He'd be asleep next to me. Embarrassing me probably because he'd snore a lot but that was total bliss for me. That can be quite emotional thinking about that because I *was* really close to my Dad and I bonded with him.

The socio-economic changes that have impacted on the relationship are lived emotionally through memories and feelings. The feeling of 'total bliss' is associated with intimacy, safety, and love played out against the backdrop of a film that is not intellectualised, - just enjoyed. This epitomises the idea of comfortable and harmless viewing.

Change is also lived in relation to family:

⁶⁰ 1979 Dir Dick Clement UK

⁶¹ 1993-2004 creators David Angell, Peter Casey and David Lee USA Glub Street Productions

I don't remember my sister and brother ever being about really. And even when he was really young my brother was quite separate from me. And my sister probably would just not have... It was really bad when we were growing up because we really *did not get on at all* me and mi sister. It's quite strange we get on so well now. [] She's like one of my best friends, we've got a lot in common and we spend a lot of time together. She's 4 yrs older than me and I've got a younger brother who is four years younger than me and he's just the total opposite to me he's *really unsociable*, and lives about two-hundred yards from my parents and has never been away, never does anythin'. It sounds really harsh on him but erm he's married and really conservative and went to work with my dad. He's just really quite different to me.

'Good' parts of Chris's self reside in his identification with his sister in comparison to the 'bad' residing in the detached, errant brother whose failure to move on in professional or personal life is the embodiment of everything Chris and his sister are not.

Sharpe and Rosenblatt (1994) note that siblings often form alliances with other siblings and this can change over time. The picture Chris paints is one of distant sibling relationships in childhood. Chris and his sister, who has also left home for a career, now have their social mobility in common. The 'anti-social' brother, who Chris sees as totally opposite, possesses something that Chris has lost in more ways than one - close proximity to his father. His brother went to work with their father, doing manual labour- while Chris feels he is useless with practical tasks. This brother embodies skills that symbolise a part of Chris's identity that he has relinquished or rejected. So it is possible that the alliance with his sister has been as a result of the changes brought about by his entry into academia coupled with the loss of closeness to his father in a 'victory' won by his brother who remains firmly working class. Chris's castigation of his brother may also contain elements of guilt at his own rejection of an identity his father may have offered (as eldest son) and which he rejected. This can be seen in relation to an aleatory moment from *Porridge*:

I really like Ronnie Barker. He's really cheeky and he's a rebel. Well he's not exactly a rebel, he's only a rebel because he wants everything for himself and that's quite funny because he's so selfish. I find at the end of the film when there's this still image right at the end of the film that the credits roll over. It's Richard Beckinsale and erm Richard Beckinsale and they've nicked a couple of apples. And these apples, they'd escaped and broken back in, and they've got these apples and they're eating them. And it's just a freeze frame of them so happy and mischievous and then it just stops. And he died soon after and that's *heartbreaking*. It's really *sad* cause he was really young and could've done lots of great stuff. I shouldn't think about these things too much.

Thinking about these things leads to feelings about change and loss that Chris wishes to avoid. The relationship between the two characters is one of father and son. The prison forces intimacy on the two characters this reminds Chris of the intimacy of home and the happy times spent with his own father at the cinema. There is also loss (death) associated with the old self as a young working class son that Chris has left behind. Fears about his own current psychic survival and the theme of unfulfilled potential are also evident in identification with Godber/ Beckinsale. Conversely Chris likes Fletch specifically because he is selfish and a rebel. These are masculine 'qualities' (Beynon, 2002) that Chris had expressed he wished to possess when he discussed *Some Like It Hot*. We can interpret this as Chris's desire for masculine qualities that he perceives he lacks, but also as a form of acknowledgement of his own selfishness and rebellion in his desire to leave his working class identity and change, the psychic toll of which is particularly difficult for working class people.

Masculinity, professional identity and family relationships meet in a particularly evocative way for Chris in *Frasier*, his favourite television programme. He: "Started recording them every night, all, like six series, twenty-four episodes in each, one-hundred and fifty episodes or something ridiculous. I got really obsessed with recording those". This is a text that Chris can and *does* watch "over and over again". He uses the text as 'wallpaper' explaining, "I have it as background noise or whatever". This is in keeping with the idea of sensationally based transitional phenomenon, used to manage separation anxiety felt most acutely by the child at bedtimes. Chris organises his home life around self-discipline and he is constantly dealing with inner conflict between 'working', doing jobs, chores etc, and intellectual study and the desire to relax and do nothing. He associates self-discipline with dynamism and is constantly disappointed by his indolence. He explains how he uses *Frasier*:

What I do, do, which is a bit sad, is when I go to bed, I've got a video in my room. And I'll put on like '*Frasier*'. I'm not necessarily watching it, it's just background noise really, *harmless*, [my emphasis] so I do that quite a lot, although I try to phase myself out of doing that. I should go up there and I should *read*, or do something more stimulating, but to be honest, I go to bed to slob out.

The final sentence calls to mind the image of a frustrated, 'weak', 'Barton Fink' lying across his bed struggling with his inability to write. Chris has found in *Frasier* a text that helps him deal with the contradictions between his inner and outer worlds and find a way of coping with the conflicts of his identities. It is necessary to outline character and story lines to illustrate points of identification.

Dr Frasier and Dr Niles Crane are brothers who are both divorced psychiatrists 'starting over'. Frasier returns home to Seattle, buying a stylish and tasteful upmarket apartment. Martin Crane, Frasier's father, is working class. Whilst working as a 'cop' he was injured and needs nursing care, so he moves in with Frasier. He brings with him, to Frasier's ultra chic apartment, a shabby old recliner

chair, a dog and Daphne his carer. Daphne is British, working class with a northern English accent. Frasier hosts a psychiatric phone-in radio show so often uses psychological language. He works with Roz who is different to Frasier in tastes and temperament, but despite this, becomes a close friend.

Frasier and Niles are pompous snobs, frequently trying to display their intellectual abilities. The comedy is generated around the themes of class and familial conflicts between Martin, Niles and Frasier. 'Intellectual' Niles and Frasier clash with Martin who holds traditional blue-collar values. Both brothers consider themselves to be culturally elite, with a taste for the finer things in life. That is they possess large amounts of both economic and cultural capital (embodied, institutional and objective). Daphne and Martin often undermine this, and their common-sense approach outsmarts the brothers. Despite the similarities between the two brothers, they are intense sibling rivals, fiercely competitive and jealous and frequently trying to outdo each other. Both Frasier and Niles, are for the most part, unlucky in love. Despite holding high opinions of themselves, and their purported superior understanding of human psychology, where women are concerned they often fail miserably.

Frasier is Chris's favourite character:

He's really *calming*. Because he's a buffoon, really. He's obviously really intelligent but he's also a bit of a buffoon. So it's quite heartening to know that even these people who are super intelligent aren't perfect, they can be a bit flaky or whatever. I really like 'Roz', she's got a really strong character *she* doesn't get any grief from anybody.

Clearly aspects of the characters' lives, plot settings, plot development and comedy make *Frasier* an evocative object/ text for Chris as:

- There is always a mother and father figure around.
- Daphne, like Chris's mum, is northern and she 'buzzes around' as his own mother did (see above).
- There is intense sibling rivalry between the brothers.
- Frasier has a professional female friend who overcame differences to become friends, rather like his relationship with his sister who he describes as a "really good friend now". It is worth noting that Chris was living with his sister at the time he "discovered" *Frasier*.
- Like Chris, Frasier doesn't always succeed in love and his long-term relationships have ended.
- Frasier often falls for the 'wrong' women who turn out to be much more powerful than Frasier, despite his intelligence.

Chris spoke in depth about his ex-girlfriend and how difficult she made his life. When he was with her he felt 'flaky' and now he perceives his new partner as being economically superior to Chris. Most significant is the relationship between a working class father and his academic middle class sons. There are constant clashes emerging out of their intellectual and class differences, which they must negotiate. Despite their differences there are scenes of love and

intimacy between father and sons. The *Frasier* family live together happily despite their class differences.

Frasier is a “buffoon”. Chris finds him calming, identifying with his flakiness. The selection of *The Nutty Professor* to adorn his living room is a reminder of pleasurable viewing in happy, emotionally secure times, but the image, along with *Frasier*, suggests that one of the ways Chris copes with his anxiety about his abilities within the academy is to ‘send up’ intelligence and ‘intelligent’ people. He spends his days at work surrounded by ‘nutty professors’. The soothing transitional aspects of the poster would act as a reminder of this as well as linking back to happy memories and the security of childhood. This marks both texts as transitional and they are used to manage anxiety associated with identity conflict resulting directly from the gendered experience of social mobility.

For Chris then the demands associated with the need to accrue cultural capital and develop a bourgeois habitus are anxiety provoking and are played out on the terrain of viewing culture. Although viewing generates anxiety, Chris is still able to find ways of using viewing to overcome anxiety, even if this is in a limited way. Earlier, I noted that questions exist around discourses that interpellate and those which fail to hail the subject. I have argued that Chris’s gendered responses to social mobility also hinge on masculinity and class. His lack of confidence about his professional and personal relationships is not just a result of the way he is positioned by discourses, such as those around the ‘crisis’ of masculinity, they are also the result of his responses to the loss of his intimate relationship with his father. His social mobility has forced separation and loss upon Chris, as he can no longer ‘do’ traditional forms of working class masculinity in the way his father does, if he is to meet the demands of being a middle class professional man. His sibling rival has usurped his privileged and intimate relationship with his father. So Chris’s anxieties and internal conflicts concerned with his significant close relationships from earliest infancy meet the external reality of social mobility. This explains the particular forms that Chris’s anxiety takes and explains why the specific texts concerning class, gender and sibling rivalry are both evocative and anxiety provoking for Chris.

6.3 Bill: ‘risky’ viewing and ‘risky’ method?

For Chris, ‘taste’ provokes anxiety and there are generational, class and gendered features to this anxiety and this coheres around intellectual capability. Bill, in contrast, is an educated middle class interviewee who exudes institutional cultural capital. He appears as someone extremely comfortable with his intellectual abilities. Bill explains that he finds cinema ‘risky’. He also finds the idea of the interview about cinema ‘risky’ but ‘exciting’ at the same time. The data produced by Bill’s interviews and series of letters provides a fascinating account of the way intellect and spectatorship are combined and used to allay anxiety.

In Chapter Three I introduced Seiter and Borchers’s research showing interviewers and interviewees in a form of conflict. I used this to begin to think about forms of

unconscious communication in interviews. Bill and I were not in conflict; he was a willing interviewee and we discussed many films and viewing experiences. However Bill posed some thorny methodological issues. Bill told me he was "very excited" by my research and was "enthusiastic" about contributing to it. He enjoyed our interview and correspondence, so much so that he wanted to keep working with me. I received a letter a couple of months after our last correspondence explaining that he was having psychotherapy. He explained that he was fascinated by the discoveries he had made about himself through thinking about his films and wanted to do more. I realised this was potentially an ethical problem as he wanted me to assume something akin to the role of a therapist. I politely explained that I couldn't do this and I reminded him I had explained this from the outset. I gave Bill the title of some books on 'Film therapy' and directed him to his psychotherapist who I thought would be willing to do this work with Bill. This request surprised me, as Bill was aware that I was not a therapist and I had specifically told him in earlier correspondence that I was not doing therapy:

Your method slips into some sort of therapy⁶², whatever your intentions *or* mine. I can feel an internal censor restricting what I can say. First of all from my point of view as an interviewee I cannot assume you are competent as a therapist. Then from your point of view, I must beware of dumping stuff on you, with all the transference and counter-transference that could involve. I cannot assume you have the support system I would expect a therapist to have.

He explained that the hesitations make the "whole thing feel exciting and dangerous in ways that add to the attraction of taking part" and for Bill this is similar to cinema, which he also finds risky. I was satisfied that I was using a method *informed* by psychoanalysis but this was not a therapeutic method despite what Bill wrote above. It was Bill who brought the language of therapy into our research relationship. Although I had research questions about biography, it was Bill who wanted to use the research and our research relationship to explore his identity. During the interview, and in the letters in particular, Bill was using my questions to 'work' on himself and I also realised that his desire to work in a therapeutic way influenced the way I asked questions (in the letters). I was trying to follow the methodological technique of following the respondent's ordering of events and subject matter but I realised that because Bill was consciously trying to work in a therapeutic way we were going down this path and I was able to identify with Ellen Seiter and her anxiety about 'control' in the interview situation. I did not have the desire to produce a particular type of data as Seiter had but I was aware that I was being drawn in a very specific way by Bill.

I found Bill's data the most difficult to work with. Over a long period of time, of listening and reading Bill's material, I found it hard to 'think'. It took me a long time to be able to find any concepts that could help me understand Bill's data beyond 'anxiety' which was suggested by the idea of 'risk'. Here was an interviewee, who

⁶² I interpreted this as his wish to turn my research into his therapy.

stated his aim was to "know thyself" and was working in a very 'open' way, yet I became aware that when it came to working with Bill's data *my* thinking seemed to close down. In the same way, I also found that my affective responses were limited. With other interviewees, I had strong 'feeling' responses. I could *feel* Chris's 'twitchiness' and Sophie's sadness and feeling of being trapped for instance. With Bill, I found that his data would generate strong *visual* responses. I found I had very clear, powerful images in response to his narratives and as I will explore below these images had epic cinematic qualities but they lacked *feeling*. I am going to explore this as examples of transference and countertransference in our research relationship starting from the position of Andersen and Berk (1998) and Chodorow (1999) that this is part of everyday communication processes. The manifest content of the transference images that I will discuss later was stunningly beautiful and epic, but the latent countertransference response, what I felt was below the image, was empty.

Bill looks back and explains that he only "vaguely understands" aspects of his identity and he attempts to use our interviews and letters to work on issues concerning his identity. By the third letter Bill had done his own data analysis. He identified themes from his film choices and linked these to aspects of his identity. For example he linked films concerned with liberation struggles to Catholic liberation theology which was important to him when he was a priest. I agreed, it was 'obvious' but my interpretations of Bill's data went beyond the most obvious readings. My interpretations included readings given by Bill and these were analysed as part of the 'whole', which also incorporated transference, countertransferences, biographical and 'text' based evidence. It was through this process of examining the whole, that I was able to understand viewing and cinematic visual imagery as indicative of defensive processes, in particular those concerning 'knowledge' acquisition such as -K and other practices that the subject utilises to avoid 'linking' as described by Bion (1962)

Bill's identity is in transition. He has recently retired, and faces negotiating the latter part of his life and his mortality. All the films he discussed came from a previous period in his life when his identity had also entered a new phase after some tumultuous changes: he had left the priesthood and married. I have explained that Bill approaches films intellectually and is able use film to demonstrate various forms of cultural capital. He discusses films that *support* the parts of his identity he feels secure with, those markers that distinguish 'Bill'; working class political struggle, intellectual evaluation of film in relation to identity, religion and catholic libratory theology.

He begins with *Distant Voices, Still Lives*,⁶³ initially discussing its "painterly" qualities. Bill discussed films using the language of film criticism and film theory throughout the interview. He also explains that the film links to his childhood as: "It has a strong connection with my past. Catholic upbringing, working class". The film is about father / son relationships and I ask Bill to tell me more about this and he

⁶³ 1988 Dir Terence Davis UK

explains that his relationship with his father “began to unwind” when he decided to leave the priesthood and his father “simply couldn’t understand that I’d done this and that I married a woman”. It is striking that this ‘woman’ that he married, and the three children he later had with her, are absent from the interview and letters: Bill told me nothing about his wife and family. He made only passing reference to his wife in some of the narratives, for example the African nurse (see below) who was a friend of his wife. To make the decision to leave a vocational life was clearly momentous, but Bill is strangely silent about the woman and family he chose to do this for.

In reflective mode, Bill reviews his identity: “I feel in some sense I remain deeply working class, although I know that I could no more fit into that world than into the clothes I wore in my childhood”. He then reiterates he is “working class” and lists “a series of allegiances” which no longer “contain” him “completely”. However, there is a rather repetitive feel to this ‘list’ which comes up on many occasions in the interview and letters. Wood et al (2008) note that reflexivity is common in middle class interviewees who are skilled at utilising a wide range of available cultural resources. It is a marker of middle class autonomy. This can also be understood psychoanalytically as Intellectualisation can be used by the subject to ‘master conflicts and emotions’ by couching experience ‘in a discursive form’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:224). Thus a form of ‘empty’ speech occurs (Bollas 1995) where a series of elaborate and eloquent words are used to keep feelings and anxiety separate and at bay. There is transference evidence to support this, as I will show.

Bill’s data, in part, is a review of his identity in the past, precipitated by his recent retirement. Freeman (1993) discusses, the way in which one’s past and one’s present ‘self’ are created through processes of interpretation which he calls ‘rewriting the self’. This process is both retrospective and prospective. The self comes into being through retrospective interpretation of past events, suggesting processes of afterwardsness and forward looking, as we speculate what might be. Sutton (2004), applying the concept of afterwardsness to cinema, highlights the visual force of cinematic images as a trigger for trauma and the spectator then attempts to ‘auto-translate’ the enigmatic signifier. This concept is apt for Bill, as his identity work has a particularly cinematically visual quality, present in language but also in the unconscious communication between Bill and me. The areas Bill explores relate to times when he was forced to renegotiate his identity and this was not always easy. I realised that there was a cinematic quality to the transference.

Almost all of the texts Bill discusses became favourites when he was in his thirties and early forties. Bill’s work and intellectual identity had merged because he taught English and Film. He had left the priesthood and was married, working and enjoying his job as a teacher very much. Bill explains that most films have biographical and identity significance: *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* connects with his working class childhood, *The Battle of Algiers* with his experience of what he calls ‘liberation Christian theology’, *Double Indemnity*⁶⁴ with his teaching. Collectively they point

⁶⁴ 1944 Dir Billy Wilder USA

back to a time in his life when Bill's identity had been through some tremendous twists and turns; nevertheless it was a time when he was settling into a new phase of his life and developing new aspects of his identity with new-found freedoms and possibilities.

Bill used cinema and film to support an identity as intelligent, political and left wing accompanied by 'authenticity' conferred by his working class roots. Faludi (1999) argues that masculinity was often figured in conjunction with a politics of *community* that has been lost in contemporary image and celebrity based culture. Whilst Chris would not have been exposed to this kind of discourse, it is probable that the young Bill, attending an elite university, would have been. Politics of community also connect with muscular Catholicism, a form of heroic heterosexual political and masculine identity. The themes of liberation theology, physical endurance and community are found in the films *Matewan* and *The Battle of Algiers*. Bill explains these films *visually*. Both films are about political struggle and Bill eloquently explains how the directors visually create powerful 'art' to convey the experiences of struggle. Bill also interprets the imagery through his experience and attachment to religious imagery and allegory. On *The Battle of Algiers*:

I remember very strongly the blowing up of Ali le Point and the others. And it struck me at the time that's almost modelled on the Jesus story. It's very much like a resurrection scene. They're looking into a narrow gateway and there's a great flash of light. It's almost like death, crucifixion. Erm the story ends in tragedy and then a sort of coda a resurrection aspect.

It is possible to see the identity work Bill was doing at the time of viewing (1980s) as he worked through his relationship with the Church and faith. This film allows him some continuity with the past. Concurrently, the resurrection aspect looks forward to new beginnings, but also what happens after death. My response to this remains strikingly clear; I see the image, the flash and Bill morphing into a Jesus-like figure in a white robe. This occurs more than once, as I will discuss.

The absence of Bill's wife and family in the interview was made salient by a narrative Bill told concerning the first time he saw *Matewan* and was very different in tone to the intellectual evaluation of the film. Intimacy contrasted with absence:

I think there was an extra thing that added to that. The first time I saw it, it was the first John Sales film I had seen. And I went with a female student from school⁶⁵ who had just put her kids and a few things in her car and run away from her marriage so she was pretty stressed. And I found her *very attractive* and sharing it with her. There was this additional buzz of that sharing it with her. [.....]There was something anarchic and wildly romantic about her. She was extremely good-looking with very beautiful eyes. I was

⁶⁵ It is not clear what kind of student this woman was. I presumed as she had children she was too old to have been one of Bill's students as his school only taught up to age eighteen, although I was unsure if she was an evening student. I wondered if she was a student teacher but none of the information I have clarifies this.

swept away emotionally. Eventually it became a cooler, professional relationship but I still have very warm feelings.

This extract generated a number of responses for me, which were a mixture of countertransference responses, and transference material which was my own. I found myself identifying with a woman who was like me, a student, stressed, with two children. I was also aware, that over time, I was drawn to the idea of wanting, to use Bill's words, - a 'cooler professional relationship' with Bill in once he requested to continue working with me. Here cinema was for Bill clearly associated with desirous feelings for a woman not his wife, an identifiably 'risky' situation.

As explored in the previous chapter the researcher has an effect on the interviewee. As a young woman with two children I had to consider the fact that I might have been the trigger for this memory. I asked in one of our letters if the similarities had reminded Bill of this experience and explained in a letter:

To be honest I see you as an attractive woman whose company I have twice enjoyed and I think of you as safe, being both married and young enough to be my daughter. I suppose it recalls safe but warm friendships with women from my days as a celibate priest who had every intention of remaining faithful to his vows or again similar relationships with students and colleagues in my later career as a teacher. I remember once taking the Scots poet (name x) through the corridors of (school) to the room where he was to give a reading. I realised I had lost him and went back to look for him. I found him standing transfixed amidst the crowds of young people on their way back to their classes. "Jesus Christ" he said. "Jesus Christ how can you possibly work in a place with so many beautiful women". He was then in his seventies I guess. I thought, I know these young women more through their writing and discussion than through their appearance. There is not much logic to the construction of this paragraph.

At first I thought that this extract should belong to a discussion in my methodology chapter, and partly this is true. Bill's reassurance that I do not remind him of the young woman may be a defensive manoeuvre, yet it is impossible to discount the way in which my presence impacted on Bill's memories in the interview. However, the letters enable Bill to distance himself from this and me physically and create a slightly different set of unconscious dynamics. If we look at the this extract with the original story of the woman from the interview, we begin to see what I think are some of the anxiety-provoking parts of Bill's identity that at this point he is not directly addressing.

Despite Bill saying that he doesn't want me to assume the role of a therapist, the extract invites free association as Bill says 'there is not much logic to the construction of this paragraph' and in other instances he had invited me to 'interpret' his material. Bill clearly had desirous feelings towards this woman which my question in the letter would have confronted him with. Bill responds with an account of me as being 'safe' alongside the word celibate as he recalled his days in the priesthood when he had celibate relationships with women. He had 'every

intention of remaining faithful' to his vows as a priest. This memory of the attractive woman also recalls another set of vows, those of his marriage, which were also compromised by his desirous feelings. Bill's relationship with his father also "unravelling" because of this decision to marry.

Bill moves to the story about the poet. Once again, I responded visually to this story. On thinking about this story on numerous occasions I am always struck by the way the story moves to a man transfixed in a crowd followed by the words 'Jesus Christ', which are repeated for emphasis. It has biblical associations and makes me think about the Sermon on the Mount, only to be followed by 'how can you work in a place surrounded by so many beautiful women?' I see continuity with the image described in relation to Ali la Pointe with bright lights and Biblical imagery rather like an epic Hollywood movie telling a grand biblical story. The image moves from a man who seems transfixed by Christ in his youth to one transfixed by beautiful women, suggesting this was a key conflict. The image then ends with a man in his seventies and encapsulates a number of conflicts Bill had with his identity then and those he faces now as he moves towards his seventies.

Bill gives other examples of 'safe' relationships and himself as safe. This reassurance suggesting that relationships with women are one of those areas that are risky for Bill. When Bill was about thirty years old:

A Sierra Leonean nurse, who shared a flat with my wife, was visiting us and when she left I walked her home. She said this was normal practice in Africa when a woman on her own visited a family but it was the first time this had happened to her in the UK. I told her it was normal practice in my tribe or extended family in X. I felt strangely proud.

Bill qualified this by adopting his intellectual understanding of the situation:

What I particularly felt proud about in walking the African nurse home was the discovery of a strong cultural bond between her community in Africa and my own working-class family tradition. It was a feeling of belonging to something older, more primitive and more valuable than the dominant liberal-individual worldview that seemed to surround me in England.

There are similarities with the story of the young student and the film; Bill's response was to evoke his identity as a decent, left wing, anti-racist and culturally sensitive man to avoid questions of his feelings toward the woman also displaying the form of masculinity associated with community values. The fact that he chose to tell me a story about walking this woman home, that he acknowledged 'came from way back', indicated it was significant. By this point Bill was avoiding my questions about films, characters and narratives. Once we began corresponding by letter Bill more and more used this as an opportunity to discuss narratives that were a long way from my original questions about films. I found I identified with Seiter, as I feared I was not learning anything about viewing or spectatorship. Bill had returned to the identity of the safe, intelligent man to avoid the more anxiety provoking aspects of the story, which concern his feelings around women.

Bill told me that he really enjoyed films that have narratives which address the idea of friendships between women. *Matewan* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* have warm friendly relationships between women and families that Bill likes to watch as he finds this comforting. This on-screen narrative theme is safe compared to what was happening in the cinema as Bill watched *Matewan* with the young student. Bill makes films safe by intellectualising his response to films and by attempting to locate the pleasure in safe narrative themes that do not threaten his identity. I will return to this in my concluding section. Before doing this I want to explore some more of the narratives Bill offered to me as a way of understand more about the conflicts that are associated with risky viewing and how I worked with my own difficult responses to Bill's data.

6.4 Afterwardsness

Social constructionist approaches point to the constructed and strategic nature of identity in interviews (Schafer 1981; McLeod 1997; Schwandt. 2000). Theories of transference suggest the significance of the physical presence of both parties in the interview. Once my physical presence was removed, the letter material was much more open to a discursive interpretation because Bill was more able to take the material in the direction he wanted. This also raises questions about the use of letters as a method and how unconscious communication can be understood when two subjects are not physically present. Increasingly, the Internet offers 'self-help' plans to help people manage e-mail anxiety and Suler (2009) has argued that transferences are common in e-relationships where the parties involved have never had face-to-face contact. I would not discount the interpretation of some strategic conscious identity work on Bill's part but I think this interpretation masks and is unable to fully address unconscious phantasies and anxieties, which also motivate particular constructions. It is possible to work with unconscious content of letters. Continuity of unconscious response is also suggested as I continued to have strong visual and cinematic responses to both the interview and letter material.

We moved to letter correspondence and Bill shifted the focus from relationships with women and began to send me narratives concerning his relationships with men who had been colleagues and friends. I have noted that Bill's relationship with his father had deteriorated and this may also impact on the way Bill has approached relationships with men. Whilst there may be uncomfortable issues around women, I sensed that there were also risks around men, which may have been sexual in origin. The following childhood experience with a group of boys is one of the few instances where Bill's narrative slips into some free association. In response to a question about *Distant Voices Still Lives* he produces this story:

I guess I was about nine I went up to x into the countryside from my hometown of x. I had felt safe in the company of the big boy from next door who was perhaps eleven. A gang of much bigger boys pestered and held us into gorse bushes. I then felt isolated but tried for a sort of self-protection by feigning to make light of it and trying to make the gang laugh. I can

remember saying, "These prickles are pricking me". At the time I thought it was very witty and I thought it had some sort of sexual reference, which I did not really understand. Gosh, this story has come from a long time ago. I am amazed that I remember it. I shall desist in trying to analyse why that might be. Perhaps this is your job.

Clearly Bill is keen for me to 'analyse' him despite my refusal to do this but I have interpreted the data and I think the story points to an acknowledgement of awakening sexual feelings, specifically around boys and Bill is aware of this. The story is similar in tone to those catalogued by Savin-Williams (2001:117) where 'unusual' moments occur in childhood which are not overtly sexual but *unexpectedly* provoke sexual thoughts and feelings. For Laplanche (1992, 1999) 'afterwardsness' implies the retrospective attribution of meaning to an event and it is through this process that an event is identified in varying degrees as 'traumatic'. As I have shown in previous case-studies the concept is important as it links trauma, castration, repetition compulsion, sexuality and temporality and involves the revision of memories of experiences, after the event in response to new experiences and impressions (Perlberg. 2006). Revision is a pivotal feature of the identity work that goes on when life events force identity into transition where it must be re-made.

Laplanche, building on Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* or deferred action, argues that trauma has a sexual component and afterwardsness is 'inconceivable without a model of translation' (1992:222). He says that whenever the past is examined, there is always interpretation, and for many, particularly those working with hermeneutic approaches, this can only ever be a statement about the present, constructed by the two parties in the interview situation. This ultimately limits what can be known about these past events. Laplanche states: 'it is impossible just to hold a hermeneutic position on this, that is to say, that everybody interprets their past according to their present, because their past already has something deposited in it that needs to be deciphered, which is the message of the third person' (1992:222).

Laplanche re-evaluates Freud's account of the 'Knödel (dumpling) Dream'. In the dream there are two directions involved in the patients understanding of the past event. An adult man sees a child at the breast of a wet nurse and in 'retrospective fantasy' imagines the erotic pleasure he could have obtained from the situation as a child 'if only he had known'. He reinterprets the function of breast-feeding in the light of his adult sexuality (1992:221). Laplanche argues, that in Freud's account, there is only the adult man and the adult man/ baby: 'one sucks the breast and the other experiences erotic pleasure', and Freud failed to acknowledge the wet nurse who is a living sexual being:

He treats the breast as an object for the child and not as an erotic zone for the nurse. There is a breast here for the subject that comes from the side of the other, which also brings from its side something erotic along with the milk. So if one introduces a third term into this scene- that is the nurse and her own sexuality- which is at best only vaguely sensed by the baby, then it is

no longer possible to consider afterwardsness in dual terms. The third term is then passed to the child from the adult: this is the nurse's message to the child. (1992:221).

Bill returns to the incident with the boys and sees this as traumatic because he understands his sexual feelings and their connection to the boys.

Laplanche's notion of afterwardsness points to an even more complex relationship between disturbing events, fantasy and memory as the 'third person'. The boy(s), as other living sexual beings have also deposited a 'message', possibly reciprocal feelings, that may have re-emerged in Bill's life. Similarly, my presence generates something in the research relationship to which Bill will unconsciously respond. This does not return to a transparent cause-effect position or a search for the 'factual' truth of the memory but draws attention to the possibilities of finding traces of 'enigmatic messages' (Laplanche. 1992) that are carried from the characters in retrospective memory traces and are also stimulated by the presence of the other. Free association as method, and an understanding of transference in the interview relationship, offers two ways of translation that can take both past and present into consideration. The story of the boys can also be seen in relation to Bill's data, as a whole, in particular the tensions around the subjective experience of identity transition. It would seem that Bill returns to particular pivotal moments in the past when change forced him to modify his identity with the resultant impact upon subjectivity. This resonated at the time of the interview with his current, possibly painful, negotiations around his late life identity.

The following story is of interest because it involves a man who Bill spent time with and who was obviously an attractive character and they had a lot in common. In fact this man was also highly intelligent and an ex-priest. Bill concludes with this:

I can't resist telling you one last story. In (university) I went around quite a bit with a priest, or perhaps he was already an ex-priest by then. He was intellectually brilliant, a considerable linguist and the life and soul of any company he ever got into. It surprised me that he wanted to spend time with me. One day in a pub he shyly licked the Guinness froth from his ginger beard, looked around nervously and said, " You know Bill. I am afraid of people". I was startled. For the first time I began to think of myself as his friend. That was a happy ending.

In this story Bill returns to the themes of relationships and acceptance. Here was a moment he felt accepted. Bill and the man in the story share some similar physical features and life journeys, suggesting identification is a relevant concept here. In particular, the story draws attention to feelings of not being accepted which are articulated through the ex-priest's fear of people. I have provided examples of a lack of acceptance in Bill's case, such as the deterioration in his relationship with his father once he left the priesthood. The similarities between the two men meant there was a degree of understanding and mutual identification that allowed the friendship to develop. However, Bill uses this story as a form of narrative closure to

our exchanges, explaining that he 'couldn't resist' telling me the story, suggesting some libidinal investment. He gave the story a 'happy ending' but the strong visual cinematic response I had to this story suggested that this was an attempt at a form of closure to end discussion about something that was far more 'risky'.

I wondered if the happy ending was also the start of a more romantic or sexual relationship between the two men in view of the fact that this was something that had been raised earlier in the data. Both men had beards at the time suggesting that Bill could in phantasy shift around this scenario as active desirous subject and also the object of desire. In terms of what this extract provoked in me I was reminded of the ways in which romantic relationships start to develop in films and the way the camera treats an object of desire for the narrative protagonist. In this case it was the view of the man's tongue licking the froth from the beer seen from Bill's perspective, which preceded the narrative revelation about the fear of people. Then in phantasy I cut to a shot where the camera shows the spectator the slight response of excitement on Bill's face and the audience senses a budding relationship, which at this point we cannot know if it is sexual or platonic. I was amazed at the way this made me think of the scene as a film scene and I found myself wanting to describe it as beautiful and the word 'painterly' came to mind. I realised that I was examining the scene as Bill might examine a film and using the kind of terminology Bill used.

There was something that kept trying to force its way through in a way that I had not experienced in response to any of the other interviews: a feeling that involved desire, linked with films and viewing in a way that I had not fully expected or understood. There was a battle going on in my mind to avoid this uncomfortable feeling that there was desire between the two men, and to replace this with a discussion of the scene's artistic qualities. It took me a long time to realise I was doing what Bill does: I was watching the film intellectually like a piece of art to avoid the difficult feelings it provoked in me. This story ended our communication⁶⁶ with a 'happy ending' and a relationship with a man where he felt accepted. The difficulties associated with acceptance in relation to both women and men seemed to point to some underlying anxieties, repressed phantasies and difficulties associated with Bill's acceptance of his sexuality. It is also important to note that the man in the story, as Laplanche argues, also has a history and sexuality. We may not be able to fully translate the 'enigmatic message' but the cinematic quality of the transference suggested that his sexuality was also alive in this scenario. Whilst it seemed that Bill and I were at odds, it was through processes of conflict and unconscious communication that it became possible to understand what it was about cinema spectatorship that was risky for Bill. In clinical psychoanalytic case studies there is often discussion of how parts of the other are projected into the analyst who uses the countertransference *feeling* and recognises interpretation would be impossible through words, even free-associations on their own (see Ogden. 1997).

6.5 Risky viewing and defensive processes

⁶⁶ This was the last letter before Bill wrote to me to ask me to do more 'work' with him.

As explained, Bill found cinema and the thought of the interview 'exciting' but 'risky'. So the two are already linked for Bill and this is why what happens in the interview facilitates an understanding of Bill's spectatorship. As Freeman (1993) argues free association as a method prevents the interpretation being arbitrary because even when the subject seemingly moves far from the original starting point, the original idea, (films and spectatorship) will be maintained as an unconscious link. The narratives generated therefore can present unconscious processes associated with viewing. Bill selects films, to watch and also to discuss in the interview (where ostensibly he is interested in 'knowing thyself'), which enable him to explore the parts of his identity around class and politics and in the process make him feel secure. So, unlike Sophie, who often watches films that she is aware may make her feel bad, Bill makes his selections defensively to avoid difficult feelings and manage 'risk'.

Intellectualisation and rationalisation are 'everyday' defensive responses. However for educated men like Chris and Bill, intellectualisation is a particularly useful defence mechanism. This suggests questions about the use of this as a class-based defence mechanism, which I cannot deal with here, but I think are important questions. Bill's interpretations of films clearly fitted into acceptable discursive categories that mark Bill out as a politically sensitive, left wing intellectual. It points to taste and cultural capital as inherently psycho-social concepts where outward displays of cultural capital are experienced internally as associated with a range of anxiety provoking objects.

There is evidence that Bill adopts intellectualisation as defence in his viewing and this can also help explain how he manages the 'risks' of cinema. Bill tells me about a particular favourite film, *Peeping Tom*⁶⁷

This film breaks the fantasy (I cannot remember how or when) to make at least male members of the audience aware they have been enjoying some of the voyeuristic aspects of cinema while the theme is portraying how dangerous and destructive such pleasures become in the protagonist. In the comic counterpoint, the unattractiveness of the older gentleman buying his girlie magazine, also make the male viewer uncomfortable.

The idea of the 'gaze' has been a central concept in psychoanalytic film theory as it explains that the sight of woman on screen provokes castration anxiety in the male spectator as she signifies sexual difference. This film is frequently cited, as an example of a text that is best understood psychoanalytically, as an example of voyeuristic sadism. The film foregrounds the mechanisms involved in scopic impulses and the power of the camera to violate. Mulvey's (1975⁶⁸) theories are frequently used in support of this kind of reading.

⁶⁷ 1960 Dir Michael Powell GB

⁶⁸ See also Carol Clover's (1993) critique of this view. Clover argues that low budget horror films align the spectator with the suffering of the female victim and not the male perpetrator of violence.

Clearly Bill recognises the difficulties that confront the male spectator and there may be some uncomfortable identification with voyeuristic male spectators and the 'older' man consuming pornography. However, Bill's reading also displays his knowledge of film theory, and his skill as a critic and it would not look out of place in the pages of a film journal like *Screen*. If this film (or any other) provokes unconscious anxiety for Bill he uses his intellect to take control and distance himself from uncomfortable thoughts and feeling. This is the pleasure of viewing for Bill, and contrasts with the younger less confident Chris who actively tries to 'learn' so that he too can take control of texts that threaten him.

Butler and Strupp (1991) argue that intellectualisation in the clinical situation is characterised by patients who, like Bill, appear to be very open, offering stories, sharing emotional experiences and offering interpretations. Intellectualisation is usually associated with 'intelligent, verbally skilled' patients who are, like Chris and Bill, to some extent 'comfortable with abstract language' (1991:100). The patient appears to be doing 'good work' and appears a 'model' subject, but they impose their won interpretation to 'avoid possible intrusions of the unconscious or interventions by the analyst' which are actually viewed as potentially dangerous (Abraham 1919). This described Bill's approach to the management of the anxiety and 'risk' of the interview associated with his identity. The interview/ letters were anxiety provoking. For instance the issues around desire and sexuality, perhaps in part generated by me. Intellectualisation involves supplying credible motives to behaviours, seen when the subject 'attempts to present an explanation that is logically consistent or ethically acceptable' (Laplanche and Pontalis. 1973:225), but actions and feelings that appear plausible may mask other motives (Butler and Strupp. 1991). Bill managed his anxiety in the interviews/ letters by adopting interpretation, and his letters frequently present narratives accompanied by a plausible interpretation from Bill at the end. As noted, many of his stories make him appear 'safe'; thus assuaging his anxiety. My perceived lack of affect also suggested that intellectualisation was being used defensively in the research relationship. I want to conclude this case study by exploring further the use of transference in my interpretation of Bill's data and this will also help to explain the 'risk' and 'excitement' he associates with viewing. I have argued that processes of transference and projection are an ordinary basis of communication and empathy in the research relationship. Transference is never simply a one-way process. An intersubjective reality is constructed between interviewer and interviewee and, following Laplanche, the traces and enigmatic messages of 'others' are also included.

Transference communication can be 'symbolic, through stories or descriptions of events' (Grant and Crawley. 2002:10) and is also present in images, dreams and fantasies. It is often feeling based (Grant and Crawley. 2002, Redman 2009) and the affective tone of the interview and the feelings of the researcher are a resource and constitute evidence. I have provided examples of countertransference responses as well as transferences of my own. In Chapter Three I discussed Bion's (1962) concept of -K, which explains that sometimes there occur defensive attacks on alpha functioning or 'linking' processes where meaning becomes attached to experience. -

K occurs in varying degrees in response to trauma and anxiety provoking events such as those concerning Bill's identity as described. Bill's reading of *Peeping Tom* is an example of -K. Bill intellectualises his responses, but occasionally like 'Peeping Tom' he is confronted by something difficult. The function of intellectualisation as a defence, replaces what Bion (1962) called 'learning from experience' with 'knowing about'. Bill recognises, in the *Peeping Tom* extract that he is implicated, but is attracted to the risk which he seeks out to test his ability at controlling and mastering the threatening object through knowledge.

Two processes can be seen as examples of this in our unconscious communication. One concerned my difficulty thinking. Bill maintained that he wanted to be open and learn about himself, yet as the data analysis shows, he was doing the opposite. He was discussing his identity in a way that was distanced from affect and it was this I was experiencing. Despite him inviting me on numerous occasions to 'interpret', I was actually struggling to think and form interpretations that were my own. For instance, the example given of the scene with the ex-priest where I found myself describing this using language Bill had often used. Butler and Strupp argue that intellectualisation can be used projectively and that responses to what is said can unwittingly start to mirror in content and style those of the subject who is using intellectualisation defensively (1991:101). I am also aware that there are transference issues for me concerning my anxiety about the research and the need to produce data about films. The accumulative transference evidence however indicated that the potential interpretations I might offer posed the 'risk' of the interview that Bill identified. Whilst he opened himself up to the risk of exploring some difficult parts of his identity concerning sexuality and relationships in our transference relationship, this was being minimised as my thinking was being closed down. It was only with a great deal of time listening and reading to the material that I was able to overcome this.

The cinematic quality of the countertransference images, because of the link with the original idea of film, gave the images a cinematic 'form'. The epic quality and artistic qualities that impacted on my responses were causing me to avoid thinking about the lack of affect. However in the story about the ex-priest difficult feelings about desire and sexuality forced their way into the film scene.

Films confront the subject's identity and desires. Both men in this chapter recognise this. For Chris, difficult films threaten him by generating feelings and uncertainties about his intellectual abilities. For Bill, too, cinema is potentially always risky, but the more difficult the film, the better, as he is able to employ his intellect defensively in a way that eludes Chris. The psychoanalytically informed method I adopted utilised my subjectivity and affective responses. This enabled an understanding of cinema and film spectatorship as defensive viewing. This offers a more nuanced approach to anxiety and viewing than that seen in film theory. Both Chris and Bill illustrate that anxiety around viewing has biographical features that cannot be read from the text alone. My analysis shows what can happen when events in the viewer's life, and close relationships with significant people, which have internal effects, meet events in the social world. Also, how films and

programmes are used and interpreted in the light of these dynamic and conflictual relationships.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

TOWARDS A PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL OF SUBJECTIVITY IN VIEWING

This chapter will review the key findings of this research. I propose to do this by reviewing what is compelling about the nature of the subjectivities of this small group of people and how they use texts and viewing. I will show how it is possible to generate a psycho-social model for audience research. Each case study is marked by its distinctiveness and it is this uniqueness that makes it possible to understand why viewing films and television programmes is a subjectively significant experience. I will begin with a brief review of the central findings, in relation to my research questions described in the introduction. The answers to which, will then be described in more depth. The method will be evaluated and I will follow with some suggestions for future work emerging out of this project.

7.1 Summary of findings

This research intervened in a number of relevant areas of media and cultural studies audience reception studies, addressing both 'readings' and 'uses'. I have shown that there is a direct relationship between the text and viewing practices. I have argued that this relationship and the interpretation of texts should not be understood only through a sociological framework. I have shown how the experience of class and gender are inextricably linked to complex psychological processes associated with viewing.

In Chapter Three I argued that this research was conceptual and this is appropriate for psychoanalytically informed research which does not require statistically generalisable samples. For Dreher (2000:163) 'concept reflecting' is useful for mapping change and context in concept use over time (2000:164). It is useful for this research because it assesses the appropriateness of psychoanalytic concepts for the particular space in which it is being used. I have demonstrated the relevance of a number of psychoanalytic concepts such as afterwardsness, repetition and linking, that have not previously been used in audience research, as well as contributing knowledge to established concepts in film and audience research such as identification. I have argued that it is important for audience researchers to retain 'the text'. However textual analysis without an actual 'audience' associated with film studies is limited. In reception studies whilst there is a focus on the viewer's meanings and interpretations, models of encoding and decoding remain important starting points. I have also shown the significance of 'biographical' and 'emotional' readings.

'Favourites' covers a range of texts which have 'impacted' on viewers. I prefer the expression impacted because it is open, and links to the idea of favourites as it can be used as a starting point through which a range of responses can be considered, from joy and familiarity, to sadness, anger and boredom. Favourites are also productive because they can be used to explore relationships with texts and also the significance of associated practices. Time shift, replay, and other technologies such as *Sky Plus*, allow the viewer to personalise their viewing, and the technology is

often personalised 'emotionally'. This technology is used to address emotionally difficult experiences through processes of repetition and for anxiety management. Despite apparent developments that prioritise the individual, issues of class and gender remain relevant. This research shows that class and gender have not been 'replaced' by the individual and contrary to theories of individualistic determinism class, gender, generation and social dependence and relationships remain crucial and they can be understood in part through viewing. For instance, certain defence mechanisms, such as intellectualisation have gendered features. Taste however has been understood primarily in terms of social class, but as this research shows taste must also be understood as a painful lived experience which generates a range of unconscious responses. Taste and class relate to issues of power and how this is lived in the everyday. The research has demonstrated greater depth and understanding should be apportioned to the idea of the 'active' and 'passive' audience, as traditionally theorised in media studies.

Psychoanalytically informed methods, which utilise biographical and narrative generating approaches, can generate valuable data for audience research. This method challenges the logic of conventional research (transparency and ordering of ideas) and demonstrates that unconscious communication should also be considered when analysing research data. I have demonstrated how the researcher's subjectivity can be used as a resource. It is also through a multi-layered method that it was possible to produce readings that are psycho-social.

7.2 Relationships, viewing and identification

This research has shown that viewers become attached to particular texts and viewing practices. For instance viewing texts at particular times, such as bedtime, as Chris does with *Frasier* or Daniel's saving up of programmes to watch in one go. There are emotional and biographical components to these relationships. Emotional responses to texts from feelings of joy, to sadness, anger and fear relate to different forms of identification. In film theory, the whole text was prioritised, but as this research shows identification, which is associated with a strong emotional response or memory often relates to a moment in the plot or narrative development. Identification has been debated in terms of 'correspondence'; is there a necessary correspondence between female viewers and female characters? Do audiences view as male? This research would support the idea of a plurality of identificatory processes.

Relationships with texts may begin with an aleatory moment (Bollas. 1992). Here there is often a strong emotional response to a text. I have argued that the narrative halts at such moments and the viewer temporarily leaves the text and moves to a personal experience and a method that can generate narratives with biographical significance can illuminate this. The term aleatory concerns the initial element of surprise which for Bollas (1992) concerns the unconscious recognition that this text can be used for emotional work. For Chris for example the element of surprise came when he realised *Frasier* was "really good". This then became a transitional object used at bedtime to soothe. Aleatory moments may live on as

memories or the viewer may return to the text for repeated viewing to do this emotional work. As the case studies show, texts or viewing memories, can be returned to in the light of current experience. Mary's response to *Father of the Bride* at first concerned her relationship with her father, but as a memory this was transformed by the experience of her son's engagement. Mary's identification was intergenerational and shifted around the scenario as she identified with both the bride and father and it was these intergenerational features that generated her tears. Her identification was the result of experiences with her father, husband and son and this would also count as a form of narrative identification (see Ricoeur, 1988).

Sophie identifies with the use of everyday objects for emotional survival in the scene in *Castaway* where the ball is lost. This scene, and also one from *Toy Story II* featuring an abandoned doll, are repetition scenarios returned to for emotional work associated with mourning. These texts make her feel 'bad' but she is drawn to them in the hope that she can initiate some changes, however small, so that she can ultimately feel *better*. Identification in both is slightly different as Sophie identifies with the abandoned doll in *Toy Story II* and with the scenario of a lost object in *Castaway*. This is because she had already adopted the practice of using consumer goods as substitutes in response to the trauma of abandonment. Here the tears in part come from the realisation of the fragility of this strategy which is made plain in the text.

Identification with a character in a specific moment or identification with a particular scenario challenges theories which prioritise the importance of the hero and his quest (Mulvey, 1975; Todorov, 1977). Classic narrative theory proposes that stories begin with an equilibrium which is disturbed early in the film. Aleatory surprise suggests that narrative equilibrium is disturbed for the viewer in instances of biographical identification at emotionally significant points. Also this can mean that the 'climax' of the narrative occurs for some viewers, at a point other than one found in a dominant reading of the narrative. This can only be understood fully by considering what the viewer brings to the text.

7.2.1 Siblings

Unexpectedly, I discovered that siblings can be responsible for a range of powerful responses which impact of identification with texts. In childhood, the arrival of siblings confronts the child with origins and sexuality in a profound way and this accounts for the fear Sue and Mary felt in response to the adult texts they viewed as children. Bion (1962) argues that alpha-function is performed by the personality, and operates on sense impressions turning them into alpha-elements that are used in conscious and unconscious meaning making. Meaning therefore is the result of emotional experience. Most obviously, this shows how the 'effects' of films on children are in part rooted in existing fears and experiences that the child contends with in its life. As I argued in Chapter Four, the text is only a piece of the jigsaw, and it is the rich sensory potential of film which film theorists have noted, which makes it particularly open to the work of alpha-function. The film moments in *The Birds*

and *Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte* operated as linking elements but this was only possible when coupled with the settings of home and the presence of family members who would also have been communicating consciously and unconsciously with the child. This shows the uniqueness of the home viewing situation, as it is impossible that the combination of factors, which resulted in these films being perceived as frightening, could occur, similarly, in the cinema. Both films were aimed at adults, and were shown after the watershed, but equally the combination of life events, the home and the conflicts of the child's inner world made *The Singing Ringing Tree* fairy story equally terrifying.

The arrival of siblings was disturbing for my two female interviewees but it also impacted on identification in other ways. Mary for instance developed ambivalent relationships to female characters in her childhood and teenage viewing. Her identification was marked by what she calls 'layers' where she would say she identified with what her parents perceived as an acceptable character whilst underneath strongly identifying with 'bad girls' or forbidden characters. This helped her to cope with what she found as unbearable pressure to be a 'good girl' and 'achieve' and this subversive viewing felt like an act of rebellion. The most 'feminine' character Mary identified with was Marina in *Stingray*. It was her 'mystery' and silence which appealed to Mary which she later developed into her viewing strategy of 'layers'.

For Chris, Sophie and Daniel, childhood memories of siblings and viewing were part of the mood of childhood. Watching television, such as *The Muppets*, *Noel Edmond's Christmas Show* and *The Nutty Professor* were part of their feelings of safety and security. For Daniel watching with "the girls", (his sisters), remains a happy memory and contrasts with his isolated viewing as an adult living alone. I have argued Chris identifies with individual characters but it is his identification with the 'family' scenario, combined with the humour, that makes *Frasier* a transitional text for him. The *humour* in the text is soothing because it addresses contemporary anxieties for Chris. Those associated with his professional life and sibling conflicts in particular around the relationship between Chris, his errant brother and their father. The close relationships with his father has been altered because he went to university and his brother, who remains firmly working class, now enjoys a closer relationship with their father as they have their work in common and they live virtually next door to each other.

Sue's case is interesting because the arrival of her brother has had a lasting effect on her identification and viewing. I demonstrated how the arrival of a sibling, when Sue was experiencing / approaching puberty, confronted her with the fact of her parents' and her own sexuality. I argued that *Our Friends In The North* was an aleatory object for Sue, which then developed and crystallised, in a short space of time into a desirous fan relationship with Christopher Eccleston. I demonstrated that in some texts Eccleston represents Sue's brother. In others she identifies with characters that are having sexual relationships with Eccleston and this is sometimes disturbing because it generates sibling taboo anxiety. Also, I showed how these texts also help Sue address her life experiences in particular the decision to marry young and have a family.

7.2.2 Afterwardsness and Intergenerational Identification

This research began with questions concerning my own identification and experiences. The case studies show how experience affects identification. I gave the example of a shift in identification in one of my favourite films: *Gypsy*. My identification which had previously been with the daughter had been changed by my experience of becoming a mother and it oscillated between identifying with the mother and the daughter. I have now learnt that this was an example of intergenerational identification where, for the first time, I had access to what it feels like to be both a daughter and a parent. Also I could identify with the sleeping baby on my lap. The case studies provide a number of examples of intergenerational identification, such as Sue's tears at moments in *Big* which feature the adult man/child doing grown up things that he was not mature enough to understand. In this case, I showed how this related to Sue's experience of becoming a sister/parent at the age of twelve and current worries associated with her eldest son. She was able to identify with both the child and the adult Josh. Mary's study also provided examples of intergenerational identification. The example of *Father of the Bride* and *Meet The Fockers* generated revealing data about the way identification shifts because of the way it is changed by experience.

The research shows the relevance and value of the concept of afterwardsness in film and television audience research. As described previously afterwardsness is often used to understand 'trauma' (Laplanche, 1992) but it is primarily a theory of memory. The past and memory are transformed by experience. Each memory, once it enters the present, is transformed by current experience. Memory can be shaped by an emotional agenda such as trauma, where a difficult event continually forces its way into memory. As I have shown in cases of repetition compulsion, there is some degree of fixity to the memory. Afterwardsness can be used to explain why certain texts can endure over time and also why texts can acquire new significance in the light of experience. Sophie, for instance, saw *The Wizard of Oz* as a child, but it only became significant to her in her twenties, when she began to identify with a character whose journey and survival strategy of adopting 'friends' was similar to her own. Also, as she prepared to become a mother, she "resurrected" *The Muppets* and this was a programme she associated with safety and security before her father left. Daniel tells me about watching *Twin Peaks* as a teenager and then focuses on a particular scene. His account was an example of the to and fro movement which characterises memory changed in the light of experience. Daniel's wish for a relationship triggered in part by the interview explained the choice of scene featuring Audrey and also explained why he was attracted to "will they won't they" narratives.

As noted in previous film and audience reception studies viewing can be used for identity work (Abu-Lughood 2002). Experience can also affect identification by making it anxiety-provoking. Mary chooses to hide her identifications with 'bad' girls, Daniel identifies with 'nice guys' and 'good boys', and Bill identifies with left wing political activists. The case-studies showed the defensive functions these

serve as they enable the interviewees to feel comfortable with an acceptable identity shaped in part by the expectations of family and peer group. Chris, on the other hand, explains that he often identifies with what he sees as weak “flaky” characters. I have shown how he struggles with his masculine and class identity, brought about by social mobility, and this was seen in his accounts of *Barton Fink* and *Some Like It Hot*. The effect of social mobility on his relationship with his father and also the way he feels about himself are captured in his account of *Porridge*, demonstrating a mixture of both sadness and guilt. Chris also demonstrated some cross-gender identifications with the cross dressing Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* and this worried him.

The account of *Peeping Tom* found in Bill’s study, illustrated that as a viewer he was aware he was being implicated in voyeuristic sadism by the camera. This had been fruitfully theorised by film theorists (see Chapter One). However, the revealing feature of this account was that it pointed, along with other evidence in the study, to the use of intellectualisation as a defence to manage this. I demonstrated how Chris recognised the defensive possibilities of intellectually mastering a difficult film and how the limited success he had with this generated more anxiety for him. I have suggested that this points, though not exclusively, to particular defences, intellectualisation, collection and information gathering and the use of self-discipline associated with class and gender.

Identification has always been an important concept in audience research and film theory. I have shown the concept remains relevant. The research has enhanced established theories, particularly those which focus on the sensory potential of viewing. However, I have argued that identification cannot be fully understood in the case of ‘favourites’ or texts that have had an emotional impact, without an account of the experience of the audience member. The inclusion of experience and subjectivity can then explain the range of differing identificatory responses from fear to desire. Following on from identification, but with some overlaps, I want to approach ‘uses’ and viewing practices through the ideas of repetition and object use.

7.3 Repetition, object use and relationships

The research was not only concerned with identification and the text but with viewing practices. Following Bollas (1995, 1992) I argued that viewing practices are important, as it is through object use that the ‘relationship’ with the object, the television ‘box’ for example, comes to life and is established. Use is unique to the individual, however some concepts such as Winnicott’s (1971) transitional object point to the way viewing and particular texts can perform a comforting anxiety reducing function. Silverstone (1994) pointed to the idea of the television as a transitional object but this study has shown that this cannot account for the varied transitional uses of viewing. For Chris, it is the combination of text, video and television that accounts for his use of *Frasier*.

Media research has often been focussed on the idea of the audience as 'active' or 'passive'. Daniel on the surface, appears to follow Silverstone's model as he always has the television on. Here I argued that the idea of holding (Ogden 2004) was also relevant, because of the 'threat' posed by time to a single man living alone. Passivity is often viewed with suspicion and is often linked to ideas of pathology or elitist cultural criticism. For this reason a large amount of media audience research has neglected an in-depth exploration of what 'passivity' means. Daniel, Chris's and Sophie's case studies show how the idea of active/ passive audience and 'effects' are redundant terms because they mask the complexity involved in viewers subjective constitutions of their viewing practices. In each case practices emerge out of experience and they can be used to negotiate the demands of the inner and outer worlds. Having the television switched on means different things for different people. For Chris it can generate anxiety because he feels he should be keeping busy and this is a consequence of his experience of social mobility. Television only becomes transitional when a particular text and setting are involved.

7.3.1 Repetitive practices and technology

Below I will discuss taste, as an aspect of relationship 'building' with television media and cinema. Habit and routine are more general examples of repetitive but I have shown in this research that textual moments in favourite texts, or texts associated with emotional impact, can also be understood through the concept of repetition compulsion and this includes features of identification with texts (see above) and also the meaning and function of the act of repetitive viewing. Repetition, until recently, has been understood as a sign of audience 'activity', creativity and play with the idea of repeated pleasures being central (Hills, 2005, 2002). Clearly pleasure is relevant, but this research has shown that often there is emotional 'work' involved in repetition which cannot be accounted for through theories of fandom or repeated pleasures.

Repetition scenarios involve the work of mourning as described above in relation to Sophie. Repeated viewing practices can be used to manage anxiety in a variety of ways, through soothing transitional functions, to taking control of time. Sophie's study also illustrates that viewing practices and particular texts and genres should also be understood in relation to wider patterns of object relating. The reading of *Toy Story II* and *Castaway* only begin to make sense when this is taken into account along with her experiences in the past and current difficulties associated with the ongoing reality of having to earn a living.

Film theory suggested the cinema to be a complex psychological environment. I would argue that the case studies suggest the home is an equally complex viewing environment. Whilst the cinema might provide a highly sensory experience, characterised by pleasure provided through illusion, (Baudry 1975; Metz 1975) the suggestion is that the viewer 'escapes'. Conversely, the home carries histories of relationships; reminders that are contained in objects ranging from photographs, posters and teddy bears, to the pile of ironing waiting to be done. The home therefore sets up a different, more personal psychological dynamic that the viewer

is unable to fully detach from. At the cinema, behavioural protocols can make the spectator defensive, as Daniel says, he finds it hard to relax at the cinema.

In the privacy of the home no such restrictions exist and a range of emotional responses and behaviours may be seen. These can range from shouting a response at the television, to jumping up to switch something provoking difficult feelings off, to tears, which might seem strange or inappropriate responses to a text. Whereas, in the cinema situation, they are contained, or in Sutton's use of Freud, 'repressed' (Sutton 2007:387). Classification certificates mean children are not confronted with adult films at the cinema. But, as we have seen, exposure to frightening films can occur in the home and the resultant fear is a combination of the text and lived experience combining to make new and frightening meanings.

The current digital landscape has challenged the ways we think about viewing and the reception of texts. The growth of record-replay and time shift technologies have allowed viewers to personalise their viewing in previously unimaginable ways. The concepts of 'viewsing' and 'user flows' (Caldwell, 2003), where audiences navigate from television to the internet and across numerous 'platforms' and channels raises important questions for media theorists who now need to grasp such changes through empirical work (Wood, 2007). This work contributes to the understanding of these developments. *Sky Plus* allows viewers to record an entire series at the touch of a button where previously video recorders could only be programmed for one or two programmes. Significantly, the technology can recognise and record 'favourites' and this opens up exciting possibilities for further research on the way this affects relationship building with texts.

Daniel's study showed how this technology accelerated the process of 'block viewing' already in place. There are questions arising, requiring further research, about the individualised nature that this technology seems to suggest. Daniel's study suggests a mutually constitutive relationship between these new technologies and his use of viewing. He has a pressing need to fill time and his behaviour is similar to many single people who live alone and the technology affords him a way to meet this need. Daniel however is not using the technology to form or develop affective relationships with particular texts, as I explained, he can always find something to become "absorbed" in. The technology for Daniel is useful for anxiety management as it facilitates a holding (Ogden, 2004) environment. The autistic-contiguous position proposed by Ogden (1989) explains the appeal of lying on the sofa in the dark, barely moving, as a primitive defence mechanism. Again, the home facilitates this relationship between viewing and experience in a way that would not be possible in the cinema in quite the same way.

All replay technology, from VHS to DVD, provides opportunities for relationship building with texts. For Chris to lose the act of recording would potentially be disturbing because his recording and cataloguing of *Frasier* was a technique employed for anxiety management but further research would be needed to fully understand the impact of this technology on relationship building with texts. This technology potentially offers more possibilities for anxiety management because it

allows for niche viewing and removes the restrictions of the scheduling of television of the broadcast era.

7.3.2 Object use

The research demonstrates that viewing should be considered in relation to past and present experience. The findings of this research would not dispute established ideas that point to one of the functions of narrative or entertainment texts as provoking different feelings and emotional responses. That is part of their use value and what makes them 'entertaining'. The viewer also puts the object to use in a variety of ways that are influenced by experience. Certain texts, through processes of projection, can be used to store bits of the self or self-states that are unresolved and which the subject can return to for the work associated with repetition. Scenarios like the man back to child transition in *Big* as described by Sue, capture the complexity of the identifications involved in the transition from child, to adult, and then to parent. This can account for the popularity of this film and also time-travelling texts like *Back to the Future* which as 'family viewing' are evocative for viewers across the age spectrum. For Sue, this scene is an evocative object, as it contains her experiences of being a child, a child-mother and an adult-parent and it is this that explains why she cries "every time". Daniel also likes time-travelling texts, but for a reasons concerned with his relationship to 'time' and it is 'time' that makes the texts like *Back to the Future* and *Simon Birch* evocative for him. Objects can store self-states from childhood that the child was unable to process fully at the time, such as Sue and Mary's viewing of adult films, which points to the limits of social learning or sender- receiver effects models concerned with children's viewing. As noted, the fear was generated in response to the film, and also life events. The memory remains powerful for the women because they return in this memory to the child who was struggling to understand a number of momentous events. This also explains why they "don't know" the reason for the memory remaining so powerful and "terrifying".

I have shown how some of Sophie's film moments function as repetition scenarios. Sophie projects fears and phantasies about her life into a range of texts and objects, such as soft toys and film merchandise. *Back to the Future* allows Sophie in phantasy to do reparative work on her parent's marriage and she also adopts the iconic objects of the 1950's America, such as the juke box or 'diner' into her life to try to make her feel "carefree". Chris and Daniel both like to collect and catalogue DVD's and videos. Consumerism has been understood as a form of commodity fetishism but I would argue that Bollas's 'evocative object' is more appropriate term as it captures the potential ability of the object to 'transform'. Consumer objects, through marketing strategies for instance, can potentially 'transform' one's life. They hold out the possibility of doing emotional work, which ultimately they cannot fulfil, which is why the consumer then moves on to the next item. However as Bollas (1992, 1988) notes, objects only come 'alive' in their use. When particular

objects meet with life experiences it is possible for the user, through a range of processes including memory and projection to form a relationship with the object text or practice.

Viewing and texts as 'objects' are used for anxiety management. As shown, this can include the use of particular texts as transitional objects (Chris with *Frasier*), the use of block viewing as a holding environment (Daniel), collecting and cataloguing (Chris), as an object for intellectual work (Bill) and as an act of rebellion (Mary and her 'layers').

The use value of a kettle or a knife is obvious and limited. This research has shown that viewing and particular texts can be put to a variety of subjective uses. Collectively the psychoanalytic concepts I have used demonstrate that a multiplicity of dynamic processes are involved in viewing. However, they suggest as many questions as they answer and I will return to this below. I have shown that using psychoanalytic concepts does not entail abstracting the individual from wider social processes and lived experience. They help to make sense of the ways experience is made subjectively meaningful. This was shown in the contribution the research has made to understanding 'taste' which I turn to next.

7.4 Taste is psycho-social

Bourdieu's (1984) work on taste continues to be relevant because it prioritises the importance of class. For Bourdieu however, taste, disposition and habitus are the results of processes of socialisation and are rather neutral categories. Emotional agendas affect choices, and selections and selections are never transparent as they contain aspects of experience. The case studies show that the struggle to adopt a habitus and develop a 'disposition' so that one might be recognised as a member of a particular class, seen most clearly in Chris's study is fraught with difficulty. Cultural capital relates culture to value as one practice or choice is more valuable than another and choices are meaningful in ways that extend beyond the individual. My research supports that of Layton (2003) showing this is experienced as painful and conflictual.

All the interviewees, apart from Bill, express some anxiety about their tastes and they attempt to show that they know that some aspects of culture are deemed more worthy than others. However with a person like Chris, who is oscillating between his working class and middle class identity this becomes much more acute and provokes anxiety. As I demonstrated this contrasts with Bill who has spent most of his life as a member of the middle class. I showed how certain defences such as intellectualisation are used and how Chris strives to attain the ability to use this defence in the way that Bill so confidently does. Taste therefore is not a straightforward product of processes of socialisation which becomes habitual, and in that way it is unconscious as it is not thought about, but it is a painful and conflictual process to which subjects respond defensively. I have also argued that defences in response to issues of taste are gendered.

Bourdieu notes that habitus has an intergenerational feature and it is learned and passed on from generation to generation in families (see also Reiss 1988; Willis 1982). Mary's case study demonstrated examples of her parent's attempts to socialise her into being a 'good' girl, but she had a vibrant 'hidden' life where she actively resisted this and rebelled. Daniel also attempts to form an identity based on his parents' demands to be a good boy and this was reflected in his identifications. Both Chris and Bill's conflicts with their fathers in the past have a bearing on the kinds of texts they choose to watch and these are concerned with anxiety management around identity. Layton (2004, 2002b) argues that the need for approval in families is one of the ways social hierarchies as systems of value are maintained and this is the result of bourgeois ideology.

As a result of socio-economic changes the 'individual' has replaced class for some theorists such as Beck (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim (2001). Processes of individualisation are associated with changes to family and community, such as the replacement of family with friends. This was seen in Sophie's study in her attachment to friendship-based texts but as I also showed this was equally driven by her experiences of loss. Beck explains the importance of self-reflexivity and this is a cognitive process associated with managing risk and uncertainty. Self-reflexivity however, is a trait associated with the middle class who have always been able to demonstrate cultural capital through choices and individuality as a marker of class (Wood and Skeggs and Thumin, 2008).

The tastes of the working class are associated with popularity and enjoying aspects of culture that are enjoyed by many. The self as 'project' and as something that is constantly being remade can be seen in a number of popular television makeover and 'infotainment' genres which Sophie in particular likes. These genres suggest that the self can be remade and improved and this taps into her desire to theme her home in a way that addresses her emotional concerns. This is not the same as the self-reflexivity offered by Bill however whose discourse marks him out as middle class. The case studies also show that unconscious processes operate in relation to anxiety generated by the risks associated with contemporary capitalist society and shows that processes of the ego can only superficially manage anxiety.

Social processes such as those Beck (1992) describes, are associated with changed social circumstances such as living alone, divorce and social mobility for example. Conflicts occur between the demands of new situations and the loyalties to significant figures, as well as established cultural values and hierarchies as Chris and Bill's studies showed. Layton argues that capitalist societies are marked by the ideology of the 'free individual' (Layton, 2002b). In particular forms of 'self-reliance' and an 'extreme individualism that denies connections of all kinds' (2002b:2). This was argued in Chapter Six and is also associated with masculinity. As argued in Chapters Three and Six this can be discussed in terms of binary opposites with one half of the pair having more 'value' than the other, in this case masculine v feminine. This generated anxiety for Chris whose anxiety around his social class was also worked over in terms of gender as he continually struggles over his masculinity and

this impacted on his identification in *Some Like It Hot*. Bill also discussed his identity and his need for acceptance in his relationships with men and women.

Sue and Mary do not struggle over individuality in the same way and their interviews are not marked by examples of self-reflexive discourse. Because of their socio-economic positions their discourse continually returns to mothering and family as discussed in Chapter Four and this is not a failure on their part to define themselves as individuals but a result of their gender, age and class backgrounds. *Our Friends In The North* is evocative for Sue because its narrative mirrors her own in many ways. In particular it focuses on the opportunities available to women born in the 1960's. Mary as a teenager, was actively exploring this through *Tenko* and many of her texts allow 'relational' interpretation as they allow her to work over what it means to be a woman, daughter, wife and mother. These remain important and suggest that for working class women self-reflexivity is not an appropriate discourse for understanding their experience and also this is not a part of working class women's experience.

As I have shown in Sophie's case, texts of self-transformation interpellate her, not because she seeks to define herself as an individual, but because she wants to work through the difficulties associated with her experience. The trauma of abandonment is experienced in the light of processes associated with new right conservatism. Sophie's emotional security must be set against the backdrop of the rise in consumerism associated with the 1980s. She experienced emotional loss, in material terms, such as the loss of a nice home to be replaced by a council property, of a dog, and of her father's income. It is not surprising that the possession of things should be so appealing to Sophie as they signify safety and security as well as status. This shows the relevance of incorporating a historical perspective as part of the method and I will reflect on method below.

As discussed, Bolas is interested in the processes and practices the subject adopts to elaborate itself. This involves object choice and object use which are both clearly aspects of 'taste' as delineated by Bourdieu. I would argue that object use, as outlined by Bolas, can be linked to Bourdieu's notion of 'disposition' or 'habitus', pertaining to particular routines or styles of object use that for Bourdieu are indicative of class. Bolas (1992) however calls this 'character'. As noted previously, this division is another indication of a split between social 'identity' and inner 'subjectivity'.

Bolas is a clinician and he is not a social theorist, so it is disingenuous to criticise him for not theorising the social. However, his approach does have limitations because he lacks a clear perspective on the way the social might impinge consciously and unconsciously on the individual's ability to choose and use an object to elaborate the subject. Whilst he acknowledges forms of conservative object use (Bolas 1995), he does not adequately theorise how membership of certain groups, such as social class or gender, might generate particular anxieties, around acceptance for instance. Or, how systems of social and cultural exchange value (see Chapter Six)

generate such anxiety that it might make it impossible for the subject to put the object to work in anything other than a conservative form.

Bollas also uses numerous vignettes as illustrative examples of generative object use. These feature aspects of what Bourdieu would call 'legitimate' or high culture - such as experiences of using classical music or art, rather than popular culture. He also attributes complexity to the former without recognising the kinds of anxieties that exist in relation to culture that I have described above and in Chapter Six.

I have demonstrated that Bollas's work is useful for understanding unconscious processes involved in object selection and use. This research supports his view that objects come alive in their *use* and that popular cultural texts and everyday practices, such as television viewing, are as equally complex and revealing as the experiences of 'legitimate' culture. However, I want to argue that social class and economic reality can sometimes predispose the individual towards the use of only a limited colony of objects that Bollas (1995) describes. Excessive television viewing might be considered as an example of limited object use, as shown in some of the case studies. It is also possible to see there are opportunities for generative and reparative as well as conservative object use. Ultimately, object use should be considered psycho-socially. The processes involved in the establishment of taste and 'favourites' are not entirely processes of the ego. As I have argued they are the result of a combination of inner processes and needs, past experience and the social reality the individual lives in the everyday. I was able to learn this as a result of the methods I adopted.

7.5 Method and final reflections

This research was designed using biographical and free-association narrative interviewing as the principle method. This method was based on a critique of question and answer interviewing which elicits 'thin, rationally driven accounts' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The method is suitable for research such as this that is interested in experience and how subjects attribute meaning to experience. Hollway and Jefferson have argued that this method offers 'an enriched, more complex, nuanced and more humane and ethical view of the subject' (2002:155). This is particularly relevant for audience research as I have argued that in the past the viewer has often been conceived in rather simplistic, dualistic terms, such as active / passive. The method generated narratives that illustrated the complexity involved in viewing and illustrated how meaning frames could illuminate a range of process, for instance the impact of siblings on identification.

Narratives help to locate viewing in a biographical and historical context. 'Why do you like it?' is not appropriate for understanding the relationships with texts partly because it will limit the text only to those films interviewees say they 'like'. As the case studies show memories of viewing are significant, but memories are not always of texts that have been viewed many times. However the method is able to capture past and present concerns as seen across the case-studies where identity is reconfigured (Bill and Chris) or where there are moments of intergenerational or cross gender identification (Mary and Daniel). The context that was revealed in

Mary's narrative about *The Birds* was central to understanding why this event was so frightening. These kinds of meanings would not have been possible if I had used a conventional question and answer technique. My approach enabled greater understanding of the resilience of human beings in response to the difficulties they face without being uncritically celebratory and ascribing positive political motives to this.

The research methods were 'psychoanalytically informed' as I used psychoanalytic concepts in data analysis. I have shown the breadth and depth of psychoanalytic concepts for film and television research developing concepts such as repetition compulsion. Concept reflexive research explores the suitability of the concept for the problem it is trying to explain and it can also clarify ambiguity. For instance I showed that texts can be used as transitional objects but that there are also occasions where their repetitive use is not transitional but an example of repetition compulsion used in mourning. I have shown that the practice of repetitive television viewing can provide a holding environment to sustain the self and in turn this manages anxiety associated with time. Evaluation of concepts prevents psychoanalysis from becoming clinically focussed, esoteric and isolated from social science and humanities and as this research shows it has much to contribute.

Following Freud and Laplanche, afterwardsness as a theory of memory is a valuable concept. It explained the way experience changes the way an event is remembered in the light of present experience as seen in Mary, Sophie and Bill's case studies. This is also relevant for understanding the negotiation of identity in ageing. This can help account for the relationship with texts over time. In my own case, explaining why my identity shifted from daughter to mother, because of the birth of my son. As I have been a mother for a long time now, I realise each time I view *Gypsy*, I increasingly identify with the mother. It was possible to see this in the narratives generated. Sue and Mary both had memories of being frightened as children that they did not interpret in the light of experience. When they return to the memory they both explain the fear and can narrate the sequence of events but they cannot offer a meaning of it in the way they can when they discuss films like *Father of the Bride* and *Big*. This indicates that the idea of a memory / text storing a self-state that remains in tact and that the child was unable to process is also valuable when exploring viewing memories from childhood (Bollas, 1992).

I consider that concept evaluation works most effectively if a form of grounded theory is adopted. The approach developed by Glaser and Struass (1967) presents the researcher with what I think is an impossible task. They bracket all theoretical and conceptual assumptions and thought about the problem being investigated. Appropriate concepts are to be generated purely in response to the data. This is perhaps a caricature to some extent and space prevents a detailed evaluation of the method but it is difficult not to follow hunches and attempt explore concepts, perhaps those that have been suggested by other work, in this case Silverstone's (1994) ideas on television as a transitional object. However the concepts I used to analyse the data were ultimately those that were most appropriate to the data

generated and this expanded the range of psychoanalytic concepts previously in use. Concept work is not purely abstract, it goes hand in hand with method.

I have argued that psychoanalytic and biographical narrative methods should be supplemented with socio-historical perspectives for the reasons outlined above. This is also important where the text is concerned. I have argued that the text should be retained and a 'preferred' reading can be used as benchmark. This is a form of 'objective' reading suggesting interpretations that the majority of people in a group might offer accounting also for cultural difference. I assessed film scenes from this position using a range of methods from textual analysis such as denotative and connotative readings. I then did further research using the Internet for reviews and fan / film / television buff websites such as 'Rate It' to check out what others had said about films, programmes or scenes. As I demonstrated in Sophie's study, her emotional response was not typical and this suggested that her emotional agenda was driving her response in excess of the text.

Film theory has, in the past, in the *Screen* and *Cahier du Cinema* tradition read complexity into popular movies but this complexity was concerned with forms of ideological analysis. Feminist theory discussed in Chapter One developed this and offered ways of thinking about the possible pleasures and contradictions of popular films (see Stacey, 1988). However, films are often appraised for their 'complexity' but this research shows that complexity of form is not the same as complexity for the viewer which cannot always be read from the text alone. As Mary found watching what she saw as a fluffy light-hearted film *Father of the Bride* or a film not critically acclaimed like *Castaway* or *Simon Birch*. Conversely, the text provides important data and interpretation would be limited without it. For instance, the scene from *The Birds* that frightened Mary, was one of a combination of elements that were 'linked' (Bion, 1962) to make the scene frightening for the child and to warrant this scene to defensively become a screen memory.

Actual audiences bring the text to life in a way that a reading alone may miss. I am not rejecting textual studies but I am arguing that reception studies, that consider the viewer psycho-socially, are particularly effective for understanding meaning frames and deepens our understanding of the 'text'. There are many pieces of audience ethnography in television studies which illustrate a range of possible meanings (see Miller, 1995; Morley, 1992) but they cannot account for individual emotional responses. This is only possible when using a psychoanalytic and narrative method. This approach is best suited to research interested in experience and would not be as effective for the kind of research interested in accounting for the contemporary popularity of certain texts and genres for instance. It is particularly useful for memory work in film and television studies.

The research has contributed to debates about the research relationship and demonstrates that it is possible to understand and utilise unconscious processes of communication in interview situations. I have argued that communication studies should include theories of communication that can account for unconscious processes. Practically this translates into working with the idea of the subjective

tone of the interview including settings, mood and feelings. I have demonstrated how researcher responses can be used to understand the data. Bill's case was significant because I had strong responses to Bill's data. I have had some training in working with my own responses in the past. I was also able to check out my responses with my supervisors. However if the social sciences and humanities are going to adopt psychoanalytic methods then the idea of 'supervision' must be considered. It is difficult for single researchers working alone to do this and PhD research has provided me the opportunity of working with others. In the clinical setting supervision is essential so this poses the question can psycho-social research only be carried out in collaborative projects where the researcher has a chance to explore their responses with others as well as exploring ethical issues? There is no answer to this but it does suggest research training needs to consider the best ways to prepare researchers for empirical psycho-social projects. I am optimistic that this may find psycho-social studies leading the way in a return to collaborative work of the kind that was so productive for cultural studies in the past and has been lost due to institutional developments associated with research funding in recent years.

Conceptual and theoretical research generates as many questions as the research explains, and this is in the nature of coping with the uncertainty of not knowing which Bion (1962) articulates. The analysis of data is always provisional and I am aware that the material included in this thesis is only one track of many that were possible. For instance I want to conduct further research on viewing, ageing and memory as a result of what I have found in this research. There were also many themes concerning work and consumerism that could have been explored but space prevented this.

I have demonstrated the value of the single-case in conceptual research without needing these concepts or findings to be statistically generalisable or replicable. Psycho-social research is sometimes accused of claiming to know people better than they know themselves (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). I disagree, as theoretical and conceptual grounded theory starts from the position that there is always more about interviewees than we know. The approach adopted in this research captures a small slice of the complexity of my interviewees and brings to light areas of the viewing experience previously not captured. In this sense then it has achieved its aim. The everyday activity of viewing television by 'ordinary' people shows that far from ordinary, everyday life and activities are complex, extraordinary and fascinating things.

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